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THE YELLOW VAN



THE YELLOW VAN

BY

RICHARD WHITEING

Author of "No. 5 John Street"
and "The Island"



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I



AS there ever such a match! A great English nobleman, the Duke of Allonby, and a mere American "school-marm" from a rising community out West where they got the fashions a month late. She was beautiful, if you like, with a mingled pride and tenderness in her face worthy of the Madonna with the bambino; tall and with a presence, too; educated, and withal of a true nobility of soul, and even of manners, that left nothing to be desired. But a school-marm going to England to be a duchess! Yet there it was.

It had come about in the most natural way in the world. He was looking about incognito for a ranch on the Pacific slope; her uncle, a man of substance, was the local real-estate agent, and so they met. The alias of his mere family name, as distinct from the title, kept him secure against impertinent curiosity, and he was little more to them than a Mr. Nobody; but he had an air of distinction, and he paid his



way, and that was enough. He stayed at her uncle's house as what he called a "lodger" and they a boarder. The two young people were thrown together in romantic associations, and in that sole circumstance you are well on your way to the core of the mystery. For the rising township was still backed by the deep forest, of which it was but recently a clearing. And here in the heart of it was a being with the virtues of the woods and the toilets of civilization.

Her charm was subtly compounded. She was cultivated and yet a wayside flower, a happy union of opposites. She had taken a good degree at her university, and was of much miscellaneous reading; yet she lived and thought as simply as Lodge's Rosalynde in the wild. She could talk the duke down on any subject, because her intent seemed only to be to talk herself up to the highest reaches. There was something fascinating in the way in which she leaned in the porch, at eventide, and looked wistfully toward a wide, wide world which she had almost made up her mind she was never to see save through the medium of the monthly magazines. She had charmed him not more by her beauty and grace than by her character.

Hers was that high-bred assurance of self of those who have never known the shock of a cross word, and who are as free from a sense of bonds as any creature of philosophic anarchy. This naturally made short work of one whose whole life had been a surfeit of deference. She was his in-



tellectual superior, and she met him on that footing of social equality on which, by the somewhat feeble tenure of a pious opinion, he held the hope of one day meeting his fellow-creatures in heaven. He had made her acquaintance at a time when his head was still smarting from the impact of two able-bodied young women of family, thrown at it in a single season by as many unnatural mamas, to say nothing of an orphaned third who had achieved the same operation by a sort of double somersault, of great initial velocity, on her own account. He was eager to be loved for himself alone. And, even beyond that, he wanted something not himself; and here it was in this most exquisite being who was all faith, hope, energy, enthusiasm, and who seemed only to live to shape herself and others to the finest ends.

On the other hand, he was well to look at, in a quiet, non-obtrusive, manly way, and his manners were almost as good as her own, though just a trifle tainted by the arrogance of his birth-mark and of his training at Eton. He was one of those rare creatures the gentlemen of nature, which is as much as to say one who has the Christian, or for that matter the pagan, virtues in a social setting, and especially the unwillingness to give or to take offense. Above all, in spite of the magnificence which was as yet his own secret, he sought the harvest of the quiet eye, the quiet mind, and had a lively horror of pribble-prabble and all pretense.

There are noblemen of that stamp, good fellows

who never feel so uneasy as when they are in their robes, and whose evening pipe after the most imposing function is a sort of burnt-offering of repentance for much foolishness suffered and some done—noblemen who go through life longing, and too often in vain, to find a fellow-Christian who will call them by a Christian name, and who have come into miraculous possession of the great truth that Charlemagne slept but little better for his hundred and twenty watchmen with flaming torches and naked swords. They are tired of their state. Oh, how tired they are! One such, as we know, actually fled from it in perpetuity, to serve in a merchantman,—by preference, we believe, in the stoke-hole, for the benefit of the greater privacy, —and had the extreme good luck to die in mid-ocean, where they had to bury him in the absolute seclusion of fifty times fathom five.

It is evident that in such a situation the duke was at the mercy of the following accidents: a summer evening on a veranda, where the inwardness of things was a sort of message printed in glowing colors over all the sky, a more subtle blend of light and shadow in a fine face, an eye drooping liquid glories like the orb itself, a pretty evening gown of white, just speckled with floral ornament, a shapely foot peeping therefrom, folded hands, and a sigh. And, one day, they all came together, the sigh with the rest. It was a sigh at the right time, no doubt, but it was not an effect of art. A sort of acquired distaste for flirtation had kept her in ig-

norance of that terrible law of the Amazons that no girl should marry until she had killed a man. She simply pitied herself, for the moment, under a sense of the limitations of her lot.

Then he sighed on his own account; and, with that same self-consciousness, not unpleasing, on her part, and embarrassment as well.

In states of this description, when they are of hopeful tendency, the mood of one soon becomes the mood of both. There is not a more infectious complaint. It was so in this instance. He caught the embarrassment as quickly as he had caught the sigh.

There was silence for a while.

"It is so wretched to have to say good-by," he said at length. "Yet I must soon go; I have had letters from home."

"At least you are going back to the world."

"Hardly: the world is here."

"As a pious opinion in transcendentalism," she laughed. "I heartily agree—but—"

"What more would even you have?"

"Well, perhaps one might wish to import the isles of Greece and all the rest of it, since they are to be had in no other way."

"Believe me, you have their best as it is—their beauty of life particularly."

"Oh!"

"Yes—just in a woman going and coming—looking after her boys and girls in the school-house, and setting them endless examples of manliness and

womanliness—ministering to her quaint old uncle and the little household when she comes home."

It was not easy to mistake his meaning now, and she grew troubled, mainly with the wish to hide the signs of it.

"There may still be something wanting," she said, with a rather piteous smile.

"What, I wonder?"

"The larger life. You should know, for you have told me of it—men and cities, Provence and Avignon, Florence, the world! the world!"

"Not one thing assuredly, and that the chief."

There was silence once more, but it was as the silence in heaven for both.

She turned toward the house.

He detained her; and, in the desperation of the moment, he said his word, timidly at first, but with all the needful fire and energy as he drew courage from her rising color and even from her downcast eyes. And, since it was to be so, he presently heard the one precious word he wanted in return, but no more.

Yet she felt that her duty was not entirely to herself. So it was still a conditional promise, with more than one clause—the full consent of the senior who had for many years been father and mother to the orphaned girl; the suitor's own fixity of resolve, to be tested by his temporary return to his own country, with all the risks it might bring forth; and withal some natural terror of the great venture of marriage in a strange land. This, in-



deed, still left her brother, a young man just leaving college, out of the reckoning; but she knew that any wish of hers would be his law.

The duke was obliged to be content with this. He had more speedy success than he expected with the old man. As a dealer in real estate Mr. James Gooding was particularly accessible to the temptation of satisfactory reference. The duke, as "Mr. Harfoot," was easily able to put him in communication with bankers and others, who, without revealing more than was necessary, fully confirmed their client's assertion of independent means, and gave the inquirer complete satisfaction on every material point.

Then he went away to his own side of the world, to write to her every day, to chuckle over her letters in reply, with her sweet little motherly cautions to him against overboldness in the attempt to make their common fortune—letters with promises to wait till he was quite ready, and assurances that they were already married in her heart. Yet, being characteristically American, she still talked of fortune as one of his goals in life. It was not that she coveted the riches, but only that she feared to depress him by seeming to question his power to acquire them. To have doubted a man's prowess for such an achievement in this age would have been like doubting his power to make short work of a giant in the days of chivalry.

And when the correspondence had yielded its full delight, he crossed the ocean again, to reveal



himself as one of the greatest nobles in the world, to lay at her feet a fortune that matched his title, to beat down every objection in his new-found joy in feeling that he was loved for himself alone, and finally to marry and bring her back to his ancestral home.

Do not be too hard on him or on his chronicler. Such things may happen, do happen, or they would never form the staple of fairy-tale, which perhaps, in its essence, is but the realized highest possible of our human lot.

II

AH, what a night of vigil it was for her when her lover had told her his news and suffered her to escape from his embrace! Her little bedchamber seemed all alight in the darkness, and every single object in it to be burning itself into her consciousness in outlines of fire. All the livelong night the brain throbbed, taking its time from the heart. The shock of surprise was too great, almost too cruel—to-day a little nobody, to-morrow to stand before kings! The mere rank, in and for itself, was the smallest allurement of the prospect; the greatest was the realization of more generous ideals. She who had scarcely moved beyond her own modest circumscription in all her life, save for a State fair in the local capital or a flying visit to New York, was now to see the *via sacra* of European travel, with a monument or a memento at every step. And she was to see it in total freedom from the sordid considerations of ways and means.

Ever, when the girl had tried to visit these romantic scenes in fancy, with the help of her little picture-gallery of foreign post-cards and her "Picturesque Europe," she had been all too surely held back by the fear that their boarding-house rates

might not fit in with her scheme of enchantment. What a thing for her to be able to put away forever such humiliating cares, and to be free for the true business of living—nature, art, and poesy, and the commerce of great souls! For she was unsophisticated enough to think that the first families of the British peerage necessarily kept the best spiritual society of their time.

Add to this her greater joy in the contemplation of those families as shapers of human lots. Her heart beat faster than ever at the thought of the good she would do as the chieftainess of an historic house, and of the obliging nature of the lesser people about her who would kindly suffer it to be done. It was rather hard to play that bountiful part in America, with a whole democracy wanting nothing of its neighbor but his power to want nothing of anybody else. A great English community, with its culture and refinement in the upper ranks, its ordered degrees of dependence in the lower, and its supposed equality of happiness in all, would satisfy the deepest need of her woman's nature in giving her a comforting and protecting part.

Her blood coursed through her veins, in the very ecstasy of being, at the prospect. But, a moment after, it became sluggish in the cold fit of the dread of her unfitness for the position, and of the tortures she might have to bear in the persecution of grand dames resenting her intrusion into their set. She saw herself made to look a fool in her own



drawing-room by vindictive rivals who had once hoped to sit in her seat, all forlorn with her want of pedigree, her country manners, and, where these failed to barb the dart, with the "twang" which was hers inalienably, for better or for worse, as much as her beautiful complexion. These white nights on the eve of new ventures in being—who that has ever aspired has not known them? And since we live rather by the count of sensations than by the count of time, to have watched through one of them is to have lengthened the allotted span by a count of years.

She spoke her fears to him next morning: only to be told, of course, that her voice was music; that, for her pedigree, she would be his wife; and that, for the trick of manners and customs as distinct from the root of the matter which she had in her own fine nature, she would be placed under the sure guidance of a dowager of his own choice. With all this to comfort and to strengthen her, being human, she was still a little wild in her course. She borrowed "Lives of Eminent Women" from the nearest public library, and was mentally marked as a backslider by the gray-headed librarian by reason of her inquiries for recent British fiction dealing with the manners of the great. Her repentance, however, was both rapid and effectual. Before a week had passed she had returned to her allegiance to classic authors, and had registered a vow from which she never afterward departed to take herself, as finally she gave him leave to take her, for better or for worse.

But what a stir in the papers when it was known! That day was her last of perfect privacy on this earth. Its morrow saw her in the forefront of the publicity of two continents—of one continent especially. Uncle Gooding, with the duke's leave, whispered it to the editor of the local paper. The editor, who was in touch with a great news agency, blazed it forth to the Western Hemisphere. The Western passed it on to the Eastern that same night, through three thousand miles of sea. Weary foreign editors looked up his Grace's pedigree in the "Peerage," and his speeches in the House of Lords, as materials for a sketch of his career. Smart writers of leaderettes compared him to King Cophetua, and wrote homilies on the American invasion. And next morning it was on its way to every capital, to every club, to every hamlet and household of the planet, south of that ultimate settlement of civilized man at Hammerfest, beyond which lie sheer barbarism and the arctic night. Such is the circulation of a paragraph when it is a paragraph of the right sort.

The evening of the second day brought down swarms of reporters, and the poor girl had to submit to the process known technically as "writing up." In a few hours more she was able to read her own history from birth with the interest of one who has met a stranger for the first time. She was, so to speak, introduced to herself. It was not that the particulars were inaccurate: she had wisely guarded against that by a meek submission to the



inevitable of public interrogatory, and her friends of course had given of their best. It was only that she had never realized herself before, or learned how the small beer of personal chronicle may still, by judicious treatment, become the strong brew of biographical record. The recorders threw her modest little career into perspective, and made it all seem to belong to one great composition. It is at least quite as startling to find that you have all your life been making biography as that you have all your life been talking prose. With the old privacy of her lot went, inevitably, some of the old simplicity. She was never to be wholly unaware of herself again. Now she felt, for the first time, that when she rebuked the big boy for rudeness in class she had a queenly glance. And her weekly ramble with the children in the summer woods was a joint effect of a love of nature, proficiency in botanic science, and goodness of heart. Her affection for her uncle was, in the same way, filial piety thwarted by circumstance, yet still determined not to be balked of an object. She blushed for herself in distracting alternations of the one belief that she was a bit of an angel, and of the other that she was only a bit of a prig. Terrible moment of the full consciousness of intelligent public curiosity when the old partnership of the soul is enlarged, and it is no longer yourself and your Maker, but also an "& Co." of the man over the way! "Blessed indeed are those ears which listen not after the voice which is sounding without." Never

again! But A Kempis never underwent the ordeal of a Sunday edition.

For the ceremony itself, however, they dodged the common informer with great success. It was given out that the local church might be the scene of it, and lo! they fled by night to an edifice a hundred miles away, with none but their witnesses and Augusta Gooding's pastor to bear them company, and were united only less quietly than the primal pair. It was the most successful evasion on record. Several reporters were discharged.

Their honeymoon was slightly ridiculous and wholly delightful. They made straight for the Mediterranean, and saw the sights like a pair of happy children on a holiday. The duke, who had at first scoffed at the absurdity of such a pilgrimage, finally made it the object of an almost reverent interest. He had run through these scenes a dozen times, but never to give them the slightest attention as matters of intellectual concern. He thought he had tired of them in that character, while really he had never heeded them at all. And now here he was in Naples, Rome, Florence, or what not, "doing" famous galleries, monuments, views, and broadening his mind amazingly in the process. It was the most profitable change from clubs for golf or pigeon-shooting, and from other transplanted institutions wherein it was still England, England everywhere, in spite of foreign skies.

Now, finally, they are coming home to Allonby Towers, to open that season in the country which



is about all we have left to distinguish the major from the minor great. The former come up to town for a lesson in humility, for they find their best and biggest still lost in the crowd. In the country, with the stately setting of their own places, they loom large on the public gaze. No man may hope to rank even as a good second in our modern Rome.

They are to make their formal entry in a few days, to show themselves to their humbler neighbors, and to entertain friends. Uncle Gooding had been asked to join the house-party, but he had declined by letter, on the ground of an unfortunate reminiscence. On his first and only visit to England, it seemed, he had been put up by another nobleman, for whom he was negotiating the purchase of a ranch. In default of a personal attendant, he was valeted by a servant of the house—"a fellow," as he wrote in confidence to his niece, "who sneaked about my room on tiptoe before I got up, hiding all my things." The statement really meant no more than that the man was merely reducing his apparel to order from the confusion of the gas-brackets and angles of picture-frames on which it had been thrown the night before. It was enough, however, to prejudice Mr. Gooding against distinguished hospitality for the rest of his life.

III



LLONBY, with its countryside, of course, was in a ferment in its own way—like a vat in the brew-house with its excitement still mostly confined to the depths. The smaller folk were hardly less exercised in their minds about the newcomer than their betters. If one set asked, "What kind of leader of society?" the other was no less concerned in the question, "What kind of almsgiver?" The village of Slocum Parva was the center of these meaner anxieties just because it was the most insignificant speck in the ducal landscape. One could say no more of it, as one took in the view from the Towers, than that it was there somewhere, amid the dim confusion of green and red in the hollows below. Slocum Parva was rarely disturbed by any event from without, but when it was it vibrated to the core of its being. It was different at Slocum Magna, about a mile higher up the road. Occurrences that might fairly be classed as strange had not been unknown there, even in that purely modern period embraced in historical disquisitions which have their starting-point with the sixteenth century. At Slocum Parva the very mill had long



ceased work, and it was left standing only because it was not worth the expense of pulling down. The village was self-contained, self-dependent, and it would have satisfied the exacting conditions of repose of Korea. It had hitherto been only a fragment of Slocum Magna, and, seen by the bird's eye, it was but a bit of dark red in an undulating landscape, still rich in all but the absolute perfection of verdant beauty, even in this August time.

This truly celestial scene stretched right up to the castle, which crowned a height of the sky-line, and which, even from Slocum Parva, could be seen flinging its immense ducal banner to the breeze. Here and there, by virtue of the residential color of chimney and roof, you might recognize what in these parts passed for a settlement of men. The nearest town of Randsford, some four miles from the village, seemed only less fast asleep than the rest of the landscape. It had done nothing of importance since, in an outburst of energy that could not last, it burned a Lollard some five centuries ago. The Towers and the other country-seats were still but part of the green and red. They were marked, according to their degree, by the greater symmetry of woodland design; and they were so many evidences of occupation by the five barons, the ten earls, the fifteen baronets, and what not, who, according to the local almanac, had their seats within the county.

On this evening of the mellowing summer Slocum was assembled in committee of public curiosity

on its patch of village green that bordered the high-road. Workmen had arrived from London to confirm the public report that the home-coming was to be in state, and that the duke and the tenantry between them would make a brave show. They had begun already to border the line of route with those scaffold-poles, unknown to the experience of the Adriatic, which it pleases some decorative artists to dignify by the name of Venetian masts. They had labored in this way all day long, at first only under the close but silent observation of the urchins and the gossips, but now under the eye of the men-folk from the fields. The groups were as yet perfectly distinct—the observers belonging to the wondering and rather suspicious village, the observed to the cockney contingent who mocked them with impunity, by virtue of their mastery of an unknown tongue. The former held together for moral support.

In the foreground Samson Skett, the all but bed-ridden navvy who had once been the strong man of the countryside, leaned on his two walking-sticks and turned a glazing eye to a pennon already in its place. And near him, for one precious moment, lingered Job Gurt, the blacksmith, detained, though unwillingly, on his way to the Knuckle of Veal Inn, which formed the background of the picture.

Hard by stood a lad and lass who had evidently wandered into the composition in sheer preoccupation of mind. One of these, George Herion, seemed



a candidate for the honors which the venerable Samson had long resigned. "Deft his tabor" was to be surmised, for he looked light of limb; and "cudgel stout," at need, was beyond all question, for strength was written all over him, and especially in the way in which his head was set on his neck, and in his deep chest. He and Rose Edmer, the pretty dark-haired girl by his side, his match to scale in the lithe vigor of youth, were intent on each other, and yet—at once in spite of that and because of it—without eyes for anything much lower than the sky. This was more specially true of the young fellow. He was unmistakably in that dawn of the idyl when the hopes and fears are in a perfect balance which a hair may disturb either way, with a certainty of delicious emotion. Blessedest of all moments, the moment when one is not quite sure! Who was the inestimable sage that defined happiness as the sense of constant progress toward a desirable object? He was careful not to speak of attainment. The girl was as yet of those who have only to let themselves be loved to make happiness enough for two.

Another female—the term is obligatory as a sign of respect—was old Sally Artifex the Methody, one of the most respected characters of the community by reason of the fact that her life of incessant drudgery best represented the common lot. She almost looked her simple history, which was a drunken husband long since laid comfortably out of mischief, and a family "r'ared" by the practice

of all the virtues on the part of his widow, especially that of thrift. She was at this very moment on her way to chapel, not for worship indeed, but only for the scrubbing of the floors, without prejudice, of course, to her rights as communicant on the appointed days.

Old Spurr, the small farmer, a wild figure in shirt-sleeves earning a precarious subsistence by all but incessant labors of the field, had suffered himself to be drawn for a moment from his customary bounds.

Even the constable paused—the constable, Peascod by name, and, to make it somewhat more ridiculous by the accident of collocation, Herbert as well. That there was no harm in him seemed to be attested by his moon-face, and by his tall, gawky figure, as of merely incipient manhood. He was liked in the village because he was communicative and made no secret of his ambition to work up to the metropolitan service, and to distinguish himself by chasing burglars over warehouse roofs.

Rupert Ness, the gamekeeper of Sir Henry Liddicot, a neighboring baronet and landowner, was naturally in the company of Herbert Peascod; and, no less naturally, his eye was fixed on the sturdy, thick-set figure of the poacher Bangs, who, as it was near nightfall, might reasonably be suspected of being on his way to work.

Really intelligent curiosity was represented by Mr. Grimber, a retired tradesman from London, who had come here to end his days on a modest com-



petence amassed by forty years of strenuous chandlery in the heart of Seven Dials.

Mr. Bascomb, the High-church vicar of Slocum Magna, in his cap, and long black robe tied with a sash round the waist, had, in his scholarly retirement, heard of the event of the day, as, in his clerical character, he might have heard of an apparition. He mingled with the villagers and surveyed the scene with an air of aloofness which still showed a friendly intent. The other persons were the infinitely little of Slocum Parva, mere items of entry in the parish register, awaiting their only chance of publicity at the judgment-day.

Slocum found its tongue next morning, and in that and the few days following it lived a whole cycle of Cathay. Its inn was thronged, and not merely because the weather was warm. The workmen from town, especially, were blessed with a natural thirst that made them independent of the accident of the seasons. There was a happy hugger-mugger of good-fellowship, guzzle, crowding, dirt, and bad air in its tap-room and bar-parlor, and even in its kitchen and outhouses, which took the overflow. Customers came from all parts. The countryside was astir, and more than the countryside.

All the duke's places claimed their part in the celebration. Allonby might have the best of it as the ancestral home and residence, but Anstead, in the far north, brought in even more revenue than Allonby, and Lidstone, on the west, was not to be



left out. Then there was the London estate. Two of the properties were the largest and richest in a country which is the richest to the square mile in the world. They had all the main essentials of wealth—mines and flourishing cities, harbors and ports, endless acreage of plow-land and pasture all the duke's, with a great density of population which was his no less in effective ownership. An acre means an acre in such a realm, and as for a league, well, its potentialities are hardly to be realized. For twenty miles round at Anstead, as for thirteen here at Allonby and for about the same at Lidstone, you might walk without setting foot on any man's land but the duke's.

And these were only the massed estates, the places his Grace might condescend to name if any one were saucy to him. The fringes and pickings unattached, any one of them a domain for an upstart, dotted the kingdom. In thirteen different counties you might call out, "Duke of Allonby! Duke of Allonby!" and that great nobleman, or some one of his name, would be there to answer, "Here am I." There were three peerages in the family. There was in all some quarter of a million of acres, and of such acres as we have seen. The London estate, not the largest of its kind, was rather to be measured by the square foot, so precious was its content in squares and crescents, and even in slums. If Allonby Castle had been bolted by an earthquake, its owner would still have had his choice of half a dozen other homes, each stored with the spoil of the ages in the pomp of life.



The Yellow Van

Perhaps the village best vindicated its wisdom in its readiness to accept its nickname of Silly Slocum. Thankfulness and rest seemed the lesson of its situation in such a landscape. And beyond, on the other side of the park wall of red, mellowing into roan with extreme age, was the Eden of Allonby, a veritable garden of the Lord. How easy to be good in such a place! How difficult not to be a poet, if only impulse obeyed the soft persuasions of nature, and faculty went with mere opportunity! Everything was at Allonby in garden, wood, or chase—all "trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste," all flowers in their season in the castle grounds, or out of it in the conservatories, cave and waterfall, fountain and "crisped brook," breezy stretches of open country, "shaggy hills," thicket, and tufted moor.

Slocum's arch of evergreens crowned with a vegetable coronet, and relieved at intervals with pendent shields bearing the ducal blazon, though generally considered to do credit to the taste of all concerned, seemed but a poor approach to this land of wonders. The Venetian masts for once reduced the straggling highway to the semblance of regularity. An inscription in giant needlework spanning the road,—"Welcome to our Noble Duke and Duchess,"—if not particularly choice, was at least simple and well meant. And the villagers had done something on their own account. Many a cottage exhibited a national flag as supplied by the cheap Jacks, unyielding, by virtue of its material of tin or cardboard, to the blandishments of the breeze.

IV

"HENRY, how good you are to me!"

Augusta and the duke are in their private waiting-room at the station, watching the procession as it forms for the march to Allonby. The train which has brought them so far backs coyly out of sight, as though rather ashamed of the wreath on the funnel of the engine.

She lays her hand on his arm, and their eyes meet.

"It is all done for you, little woman. I want to show them how proud I am of my wife."

They have come down for the great day of the entry, and she is still under the impression of their run through the perfect scenery. Its suggestion of order, peace, prosperity, of a toilet made every morning, as with brush and comb and even tweezers, has appealed to her, as it appeals to every one. It is beyond the England of her dreams.

"Henry, I feel that I am going to be happy ever after. But please don't go on making me talk."

The absolute novelty of most of it is part of the charm. You may always have that at command by crossing a frontier for the first time. Every-

thing looks a little wilfully wrong, but with this it has the air of being quite delightfully itself. Even Peascod attains to originality as he takes his place in the ranks of constabulary that are to lead the way. Their helmets are, at any rate, somewhat taller and uglier than the variety worn in town.

The first section of the procession consists of the agricultural estates of the ducal realm, the tenants holding under the duke. Here are the large farmers on horseback, the men renting by the five hundred or the thousand acres, most of them belonging to the smaller gentry and some to the greater. They ride as masters of those who line the road, with manifest pride in their great and well-ordered farms, their farm-houses which are little mansions, their stately use and wont of life—the dinner-bell and the dressing-bell before it, the refined womanhood in the drawing-room and boudoir, the prize stock in their stables, whereby they make a living of a kind out of land ever tending to cease altogether to rear corn and men. The small farmers, fifty-acre men and less, are to follow them afoot, and among them is the venerable Spurr, smartened up for the occasion, his every-day self only to be recognized in his still untamable beard and whisker and his iron hair.

"And the hired hands behind them," says Augusta, "in their store-clothes! Why don't they wear their smock-frocks?"

"Because they have n't got 'em, my dear. Nothing of that sort now except in the picture-books.

By the by, Augusta, would you mind saying 'agricultural laborers'?"

"Oh, Henry, who told me I had such a tiny mouth?"

She is aware of a secret pang of resentment against Kate Greenaway, but she keeps her own counsel, if only for fear of making another mistake. But for this she might have ventured a remark on the vacuous placidity of the laborers' faces, due, though she does not know it, to the fact that, among the fifty of them, there is not so much as a yard of land or the rudiments of a syllogism.

The carriages now being marshaled into line restore the dignity of the scene. They bear the chiefs of the districts into which the Allonby estate is marked out—mostly younger sons, for the appointments are much coveted by men of family with a turn for field-sports. The agent stands between the tenants and the duke's head man—receives their petitions for redress of grievance, forwards these, with the report, to the central office, and is generally a little governor of his province.

One agent, whose years and bearing do not suggest recent service in the cavalry, is hailed with a murmur of "There go old Snatcher" that betokens a sort of gruesome admiration on the part of the crowd.

"'Old Snatcher'?" murmurs her Grace, as though to give an opportunity for an explanation without insisting on it.

"A mere nickname," returns the duke, evasively.



The Yellow Van

This personage, who has seen most of his service under the late duke, is indeed the most skilful picker up of unconsidered trifles of common land in the whole countryside. In days past the peasant had his rights to the waste land as well as the lord. In fact, only when the man was served could the master stretch out his hand for the superfluity. Whole generations of Snatchers have generally put an end to that, but, here and there, precious strips of greensward, dear to the camping gipsy, remain by the roadside and elsewhere, a kind of no-man's-land. The venerable Snatcher has a way of grabbing those for his employer—"snicking" is the local term—which is unsurpassed. First, he puts up a notice-board warning mankind at large against trespass and its consequences. Then, when the notice has matured into a kind of assumption of private ownership, he puts up a fence. The fence, in its turn, matures into a full recognition, as from time immemorial; and the strip is now part of the ducal domain.

"He seems a good old man," says the bride, ready to take everything for the best.

The bridegroom says nothing to the contrary.

Distant strains from a band following the constabulary show that the head of the procession has begun to move. This leaves more elbow-room for the next section, still in course of formation, the staff of the Yard. The Yard is still a peculiar feature of some of the old-fashioned estates. It is the great industrial village nestling under the

castle at the other side of the ridge, where all the needful builders' work on the whole stretch of the property is done by the duke's own men. It is part of the traditional system of making the domain sufficient to itself, and wanting nothing from the world without. Here are forges, workshops, and the like, and all the duke's. The overseer, the foremen, the gangers, marching heads up and with steady step, have the air of old retainers, proud of their service, and aware that, with good behavior, it is a service for life. Their leader, the clerk of the works, follows in a carriage, as befits one whose business it is to decide in the last resort, subject to the veto of a superior who has the right of personal audience and who takes the pleasure of his Grace.

More music, and then come the retainers from the north. Anstead, the duke's creation as a pleasure-city by the sea and his property, is represented by its town council in deputation, a dash of welcome color in robe and chain. The great seaport miles away, distinguishable from Anstead with powerful glasses by the faint haze of its own smoke, is the duke's, too, in ultimate ownership, and a due share of its rich yield in the profits of commerce on every sea goes into his coffers. Grave delegates of its harbor board follow the municipality of Anstead, to do their homage with the rest.

The whole district is rich in mine and quarry, and it sends the representatives of the companies mining under the great man. Augusta gives a lit-

tle cry at the sight of a few figures in outlandish rig who form part of this contingent. They are pallid in complexion, but wiry by the evidence of their springy tread.

"Pitmen," explains the duke.

They wear brand-new mining-suits as a decorative effect, and they carry their lamps and the weapon-like tools of their craft. The duchess regards them with wonder not unmixed with awe. They have that strange air of otherworldliness common to most men, even the roughest, who habitually bear their lives in their hands. Other miners and quarrymen follow, and the rear is brought up by the mineral bailiff, a dignified person in a closed carriage, who is chief officer of this part of the domain.

The Lidstone and London estates march together, as being too far-fetched to claim full pride of place. They are separated only by the steward of Allonby Castle, a little beyond his beat, but seen in all the better relief on that account. He is the prime minister of the mere household, and it is so vast, with its army of servants, and so engrossing, with its huge tradesmen's accounts and its frequent changes of place, that its intendant need hardly yield a point to a viceroy in his look of weariness of the labors of his charge. The town contingent includes clerks, agents, architects, and surveyors, some of them members of the cabinet council of the board that manages the London property, occasionally under the presidency of the duke himself.

His Grace nods to the next comer, the great man who centralizes the general management of the whole territory in his capacious brain. He is the only one of all the throng who has direct personal relations with his master as a matter of right. He sits in a finely appointed carriage, not gaudy but good, behind high-stepping bays; and no mandarin with the privilege of the audience-chamber could wear a loftier air. You can do nothing without him, and you had better make up your mind to that. He dispenses as much patronage as a minister, and he holds some of the proudest people of England in the hollow of his hand. He is but one remove from supreme greatness, for as beyond him there is nothing but the duke, so beyond the duke there is nothing but the King of England.

The nobility and gentry whose carriages come next in the line are, in a sense, equals of the duke, yet they yield a willing homage to him as the chief of their order. Many of their womankind are with them, on their way to the reception. The duke points out Sir Henry Liddicot, his near neighbor, with his daughter, a fresh rosebud set in a fine confusion of silk and chiffon, whose all but unattainable white and red wins Augusta's generous praise. These are followed by the superior clergy, a prelate as a matter of courtesy, and many members of the chapter of the cathedral which has its site in one of the duke's towns. His Grace presents to so many pulpits that a wise church cannot remain indifferent when he brings home his bride. It is

divinity still in the good company of law, as the latter is represented in the file of gentry by the county bench.

The marshal of the pageant now enters, hat in hand, to claim the victims. Augusta feels sure all the color has left her cheek as she steps forth on her husband's arm to take her place in a chariot and four with postilions and with outriders. Her interest in the crowd, as a matter of narrative, is henceforth lost in the crowd's interest in her. The whole procession is now on the march, and it moves to the most inspiriting discord of shouting, of brazen instruments, and of clanging bells. Slocum meanwhile, unable to contain itself any longer, sends forth swift couriers from the village school for tidings, and finally one returns breathless to announce a sound of trumpets and a gleam of uniforms and arms. The villagers turn out to line the street behind the masts; the school-children, with some pushing and many rebukes, take their places for the choral welcome; and then, since there is nothing more to do, Slocum stands still and listens to the beating of its own heart.

They are in the village now, and the volunteer band blows "The Conquering Hero," a welcome relief from previous excesses in the "Wedding March." The strains presently cease by command, as the children take up their choral song, clear, exquisite, and penetrating to the innermost sense with the inalienable innocence of the singers, let the little monkeys be what they may. It is maddening



when the band resumes. The very frogs in the pond, roused from their broken slumbers, croak a protest that serves to swell the volume of acclaim. It would be hard to say whether they or the visitors best represent the negligible quantity. The gulf is a wide one between both of them and Henry Plantagenet Mackenzie Norice-Vesey-Ravelin-Harfoot, Duke and Marquis of Allonby and Lidstone, Earl Ravelin, Viscount and Baron Rodmund, Earl Norice, and Lord Poynce. There was more of it as the lawyers compared parchments over his marriage settlement, as there will be more when the heralds recite style and titles over his grave.

He is a most amiable nobleman to the view, especially as he now sits bowing and smiling from his seat. The features, in so far as they are those of a race, were evidently once strong. But they have been rounded by centuries of easy living, and the assurance of a life beyond the accident of events. The eyes have lost the glare of those of the great ancestor who held the French duke fast at Crécy till the first of the Liddicots came up to make good the precious prize and to earn that fifth share in the ransom which was the foundation of both their fortunes. The chin may be as square as ever beneath its soft coating of flesh, but there is the coating, as you can but guess. All the old family faces get worn down in this way. The snub noses of the Pharaohs attest the dateless age of their line. Such are the ravages of ineffable calm; and Eastern art has done well to choose their effects for



its type of a being that has passed beyond all perturbation of mortal affairs. The duke, in fact, in one aspect, is a Buddha in a Bond-street tie—the right tie. His very hair is neither dark nor light, but chestnut; his blue eyes sparkle with geniality but with no stronger flame; his features are regular; his eyebrows form an easy line; he seems neither tall nor short, but just the mean. With so many stored deeds behind him, he has no taste for further exercise in the toils of the arena. He looks as restful as an old athlete.

His duchess, whose one moment of misgiving has long since passed, wins general praise. Her dressmakers and her sense of self-respect, between them, have wrought wonders in fitting her for her new part. It is the governess still, but the American variety of the type; and in the short drive she has taught herself to regard the roaring crowd before her as but a larger class. She is a stately creature in build and beauty, a Diana of Versailles who has stooped to the yoke of marriage. The note of the face is dignity with animation. It looks at once supermundane and yet aware; above the meaner concerns of life, yet not unmindful of their existence. All beauty has its particular "message." Why the message of this type of it has so much attraction for the race of man, which, in its aggregate, rarely rises superior to petty concerns, is a mystery. Yet it is perhaps to be explained by the fact that we are prepared to admire in others our own unrealized ideals, and that next to succeeding

on one's own account is the pleasure of beholding another who has arrived.

The duchess looks as magnanimous as we all should like to be. She is therefore as interesting as those ladies of the pagan heaven who have at once, with the sense of mortal anxieties, the power to despise them. The firm, regular features are tempered into amiability by the gracious curves of the mouth, by the lenity of the eyes, and even by the magnificent sweep of the hair from the brow, as though it had been carried backward in one impetuous gesture, in a futile attempt to escape from the oppression of a mass of gold. She is tall—one can see that as she sits—and queenly in her bearing, in being superbly at ease with herself. She bows to right and left, looks happy and even touched, and speaks frequently to the duke in running comment on everything she sees. The village beauty, Rose Edmer, is evidently one subject of remark as she gazes with trance-like fixity on the vision of commanding loveliness before her. In this way the eyes on both sides meet, as though in pledge of future acquaintance. While Rose looks at the duchess, George Herion, after a momentary glance of curiosity at the carriage, looks at her. The arrangement seems eminently satisfactory to all the parties concerned.

Yeomanry and mounted police close the procession, and it is soon lost in the ample grounds, with their twenty miles of drives. Then it winds about till it comes in sight of the castle on the other side

of the lake, with the time-worn battlements and towers rising from their foundation of solid rock and glowing in the rays of the setting sun. As it nears the outer gate it halts to enable the duke to dismiss his humbler friends with a few well-chosen words of thanks and of welcome, to their entertainment in the grounds.

The others, after leaving the barbican and the Norman gateway, alight at the entrance to the main building, and, passing by the grand staircase and the guard-chamber, finally reach the great hall, in which the reception is to be held. There is no banquet, for there would be too many to serve; but there are refreshments which the reporter in the county paper will in due course describe as palatial. The scene is one of wonderful suggestiveness, as the county and the dependencies beyond, in their myriad activities of wealth and industry, file before the ducal pair, and it presents no bad image of the state of a modern noble, and of his household of agriculture, trade, and commerce which has taken the place of the household of arms.

V

 LLONBY is the new planet for Augusta. Nothing resembles what she has left behind, except the human nature. In the planet, according to Utopian fancy, they are without lungs, without stomachs, or without feelings. In this one, while still crouching under such burdens, they are like none but themselves. They begin where other folk leave off, and end in the same eccentric way. A topsy-turvy world, yet such a world of its own!

The one compensation is her immense enthusiasm. She has come as a believer. It is still the England of her dreams—an England where everything stands out romantic, beautiful, against its background of historic past.

Her diffidence about herself is a hindrance. What would she not give to be a mere spectator, watching, wondering, taking in, with nothing to give out, and thanking God meanwhile in whispers for the variety and design of his universe. But to have to lead the dance!

It would be overwhelming, were it not for the rooted determination in her—a sort of birthmark of character—to be equal to her fortunes, whatever they may bring. The trial that has come to her

is none of her seeking, and she is going to see it through. In this consideration the extremes of diffidence and of self-confidence meet. The golden rule for travel in all strange places is notoriously to keep your nerve. In this way you keep your head along with it, among the wildest. Augusta is at present in a circle of chiefs, who watch her, though not unkindly, for the slightest sign of fear. And she is so frightened, and so brave.

Her strong points are those of the ancient Persians: she can ride and speak the truth. The riding, in one of her station, is a mere accident of her life among the ranches. She has no remembrance of a time when she could not master a horse. That mastery wins unwonted indulgence for her knowingness about other things.

"My dear," says her tutelary dowager, a relative of the duke, "don't talk booky to 'em, or they 'll think you 've been a lecturer."

"Aunt Emily!"

"Well, yes, I know; only do give 'em a chance, my dear. And don't let your travels run into archæology. It gives them a turn. Don't mind an old woman's counsel, and give me a kiss. I 'm so delighted you 're goin' to be friends with Mary Liddicot. She 's such a nice girl."

The dowager has certainly not spoken too soon. The two younger women—if Mary, as a mere legal infant of seventeen, is to be reckoned a woman—are good friends already. They are together in the private garden this morning.

"Why not sit here, duchess?" And Mary throws herself on a time-worn step of the terrace. "We may dodge the sun for an hour under the balustrade."

It is notorious that no human being can possibly be half so good as some women look, so devotees must e'en make the best of the limitations of our fallen nature. Here, for instance, is another of them who seems all health of body and of mind in fresh cheek, clear eye, straightness of manner. Health is always beauty of a kind, but other is not wanting in the fine, firm drawing of cheek and brow, tempered into expression by the suavity of the mouth and the benignant eyes.

"Will the steps bear us, Mary? That is the point. And please don't call me 'duchess' any more. Augusta is my name."

"Why not, d—I mean Augusta—as to the steps?"

"It will have to be something shorter to-morrow; so I give you warning. As to your silly question, look at the crannies and the moss."

"Yes; and as to your wise answer, don't forget the fresh masonry on the other side."

"The old order and the new patchwork, eh, Mary?"

"Just like Allonby, at any rate. We are more consistent in decay at Liddicot."

"Well, I take your word for it; for who ought to know Allonby, if you don't? That is why I want you to show me round my own place."

"Then come to the bowling-green; we shall be

better under the terrace there. Give me a hand with the sketching-traps, and I 'll lead the way."

"Oh, is n't it just lovely!" cries the delighted duchess, as they reach a stretch of faultless turf lying under the shelter of an ancient wall. "But I forget: I must n't put it in that way."

"Why not?"

"Slang—and not English slang, at that."

"What 's the matter with it?"

"Mary, you must help me in these little things. Be cruel to be kind. What would you have said now?"

"What about?"

"About the loveliness."

"What could I have said but 'it is lovely'?"

"Ah, you 've left out the 'just' in spite of yourself; so I stand rebuked."

Lovely it is, for want of a better word. The sheared grass stands as firm and upright in its ranks as a regiment of Spanish pikemen. The wall, a mere accident of lusty decay, has been turned to the best account. It is paneled by its buttresses, and every space between them is a mass of flowers springing from a bed of mold at the base. There are more flowers in the coping, with potted plants to mark the lines of buttress, and the whole composition has the time-worn red of the brickwork for its background. A clipped hedge forms the border on the other side of the alley, and gives a choice of luminous shade. There is more turf beyond the wall, and beyond that a growth of wood vast and

deep enough, to all appearance, to house the whole pagan world of dryad and faun. Impenetrable privacy is the note. Surely, if there can be any sure defense against the siege of troubles, here is the triple line.

"Too beautiful," again murmurs Augusta. "Who wants to play at stupid bowls in such a place—or to play at anything except being in heaven?"

"Well, you must decide, you know. It is your garden, all yours. Father says the duke himself would hardly intrude without asking leave."

"Mary, we 'll sit here all day long and read 'The Golden Pomp.'"

"What about exercise?" says Mary, simply.

"Oh, very well. I 'll learn the stupid game, if I must."

"Why should you? There are links on the other side of the wood. Yours, too. 'All trespassers will be prosecuted'—even from the house-party."

"The house-party!" echoes Augusta, with a sigh. "Well, never mind all that this morning. Let us just sit here and feel sorry for most of our fellow-creatures. Ach, du lieber Gott!"

The head coachman approaches and touches his hat. "Would your Grace like to see the stables this morning? The horses came down yesterday."

"Stables, Mary? Must it be stables now? One might as well be back home."

"Well, you see they 're your stables. Jarvis might feel—"



The Yellow Van

"Say no more, my dear."

Mr. Jarvis is very proud of his horses, his carriages, his harness-room, of all that is his as head coachman of the duke. The stables are marvelous; and the lodging for the men is worthy of the lodging for the beasts—you can say no more. The woodwork is real and rare, the plated metal is as good as silver to the eye. The architect was a poet playing with a fancy of stately comfort in brick and tile picked out with crest, coronet, and monogram, and with the most lavish exercise of invention. The mere cleanliness is a marvel, too. Mr. Jarvis's ideal is a place in which the duke, should he ever wish to do anything so absurd, might "eat his dinner off the floor." With all its brightness, it is as severe in taste as a Greek temple. There is no superfluity—if only for that reason, there is no dirt. There is only everything of the very best, even light and air, and, at need, artificial warmth. The riding horses are shown by the stud-groom, a swell of the domestic order who wears no livery, and whose office is of historic origin. The splendid creatures in residence, glistening in their coats to match the general scheme, turn meek faces, with eyes of fire, as the visitors trip from stall to stall without once having to lift a skirt. Here is Chieftain, the champion hunter of England, who, it is hoped, may carry the duchess herself.

The auguries are favorable. "The beauty—beauty!" cries her Grace, running her hand over

his coat. "We 're going to be the best friends in the world, Chieftain." And she lays against his neck a face that stands out fairer than ever from the background of bay.

"Sixteen hands, or hardly an inch under, your Grace."

"Surely not quite that!"

"It 's his build, and good proportions. He matches himself all over. You can have a horse as big as a house if you breed him right. If ever anything happens to him, I 'll keep his skeleton, and then your Grace will see what he is in bone."

"May my skeleton be ready first! I 'm going to love him too much."

"Augusta, Augusta, come and see your new ponies!" It is a cry from Mary, who leads the way. She stands in ecstasy before a pair matching in everything but color, and in that a sharp contrast which shows that no match has been sought.

"Twelve hundred and fifty guineas is what the duke paid," says Mr. Jarvis; and, like a wise man, he leaves it there.

"He is too good," murmurs the duchess.

And, after all, it might have been worse. What of that queen of Egypt who had the revenues of a whole city to keep her in shoes alone!

The ponies are skittish and resent her caress; but she goes away with an uplifted forefinger that promises a speedy struggle for the mastery.

"The Yankee trotter is for the duke. Supposed to beat anything in this country," says Mr. Jar-

vis, in a tone which marks his indifference to all that lies beyond. "Your Grace might like to see the harness-room?" His *h's* bespeak his social altitude. He has risen by them, as well as by his skill with the reins.

It is a wardrobe of fashion, only it has a richer variety of suits. The more costly ones shine out at you in gold plate and patent leather from their cases of plate glass. Even the least costly have that kind of right through excellence which marks the struggle for perfection. The best that money can buy is Mr. Jarvis's estimate of its claim to notice; and he is right. Where it forbears ornament, the leather is still silky to the touch; and the mastery of its hand-stitching might bring a saddler's apprentice to his knees.

The stud-groom, in the interest of his colleagues, now urges the kennels, the stud-farm, the pedigree cows, even the aviary, since there is everything in the wonderful place. But the duchess has to tell him that these are for another day. After duly expressing her approbation, she turns toward the castle, first stopping to pick up a bewildered Japanese spaniel which has followed her to the grounds. The picturesquely ugly mite is of course one of the costliest things of its kind in all England. Everything is of price at Allonby. The meanest of the stable-hands flitting to and fro on their labors in the glorious sunlight has the sense of the choice and the exclusive. The fellow sponging the foolish face of one of the Jerseys, that

keeps her apartment by the doctor's orders, is ready, on the slightest encouragement, to recite her style and titles to the distinguished visitor. Sally is the heroine of half a dozen agricultural shows, and her certificates of glory are nailed in black and white over her stall. She is the best Jersey in all England, bar none; she fetched the best price, and she belongs to the best duke and duchess in that favored land. It makes the lowest of them feel their kinship with the real old sort of the foundation of things; and that is moral impulse, of a kind. Here is Allonby, and on the other side of its wall is the balance of the world. Their very expletives are tempered by a sense of the dignity of their office, and even their occasional profanity is counted but another mode of clean speech at the Knuckle of Veal.

The ladies are for turning back to the house, but the duchess has a sudden fancy: "Mary, I think I 'll begin to be good friends with Chieftain now. I 'm wild for a gallop. Ask them to saddle him, while I run inside and put my habit on."

"Augusta! The duke?"

"I thought he was my horse. I must have one spin on him, if I die for it."

Her readiness to accept this gruesome condition by no means puts the stud-groom at his ease. "Your Grace might like to try him first in the riding-school. We don't know him very well ourselves yet."

"Hush! he 'd never forgive us if he heard us talking like that. Wait for me here, Mary."

She scampers into the house, and her guide turns, with a sigh, to give the necessary orders. They have hardly been carried out when she reappears in costume, and comes running toward the unhappy pair.

"Her Grace took it into her own head, Miss Mary. You 'll bear me out in that—"

"You don't think it might be better to wait, Augusta? He 's new to the place, you see, as well as to the people. He might—"

"How could he, now, when I 'm going to give him this nice lump of sugar? But it 's not for the goodies, Chieftain dear, is it? It 's because he likes me."

She nestles up to him again, caresses him, seems to whisper in his ear, glances at his girths, and in another moment, with the help of a broad palm, is in the saddle, with the reins in hand.

"Adios, Mary. Just one spin across the park!"

"She 's off," mutters the chief officer, evidently not in the best temper with her, nor indeed with anybody, including himself.

It is not a mad gallop by any means, but it is a smart one. Chieftain is fresh and skittish for mere joy of life, but he has a foolish idea that he could get on better if he had the spin to himself. He flies with her now and then, and once or twice shakes himself ominously, as though thinking he would like to ask a question before accepting her for better or for worse. It is presently asked and answered. As soon as they have come to a perfect understanding, she gives him his head for a run

before the wind, talking pleasantly to him the while. Then, just as he begins to feel he has had enough of it, she gently eases him down into trot and walk, leaving him, and perhaps herself for a moment, to fancy that it is all over. But there is a long fence between them and the spot where Mary and the others stand, and it is clear that Augusta has made up her mind to take it on her way back. The gradual change in Chieftain's pace shows that he has received the necessary orders, and soon he is in full course for the obstacle.

"I don't like this kind of circus work," mutters Mr. Jarvis, wiping a cold drop from his brow. "I can't stand it, if you ask me." There is no time to say or even to think more. In another moment they are at it, and, in a moment again, safe and sound on the other side of the wall.

"She 's done it, by—" mutters Mr. Jarvis, reining himself in on the very edge of expression. "This must be my lucky day." He also forbears to add, "Who said she 'd only been a governess?" but it is in his mind. His only additional observation is, "She 'll do."

"Sorry!" laughs Augusta, as she touches earth and her friend's cheek once more. "It had to be done. I was beginning to feel—you know. But don't look so cross, dear! I guess I can take care of myself as well as the next one when I 'm on a horse."

"What about the appointment with Mr. Raif?" was all that Mary allowed herself to say.

"With Mr. Raif?"

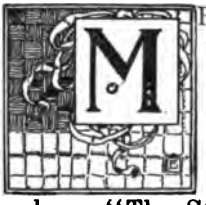
"Yes: the domestic chaplain, duchess."

"Augusta, if you please—Miss Liddicot!"

"And Mr. Bascomb. You know they are both to come to you this morning about the poor in the village. I dare say they are waiting in your morning-room."

"Oh, hurry up, Mary, like—like a little lamb, and go in and amuse them while I change. I 'll be down again before you have finished with the weather." And she was almost as good as her word.

VI



R. RAIF, the domestic chaplain, is the born conscience-keeper of a noble pair, sleek, apple-faced, unwrinkled, untroubled by a doubt. He has cast all difficulty of that sort behind him in his solitary volume "The Struggle for Faith," the title-page of which is the sole attestation of his having ever wrestled with a fiend. The victory has been so unmistakably on the right side that it has left him scarcely a memory of the encounter. The work commended him to the duke by the orthodoxy of its sentiments, and he was appointed to the dignified office of reading prayers twice a day to the household. He has thus, by anticipation, entered into the joy of his Lord. His parsonage, within the gates of the domain, has a wide prospect of the scenery that may easily be regarded as an outlook on the plains of heaven. There, surely, in the remoter distance, is the green bank in a flowery valley where angels will one day serve far more excellent nourishment than afternoon tea to him and to the whole croquet-party on his lawn. All is in harmony in the celestial view. In the nearer distance is the model village of the domain, in which

Mr. Raif keeps in comfort the castle poor—for Allonby has its pet breeds in this line, as in horses and cows—on the easy condition of their being perfectly virtuous in order that they may be perfectly happy. They rise with the lark and retire with the other reputable birds. They carouse on mineral waters. They peruse the cheaper British poets in a reading-room which is quite a little masterpiece of domestic Gothic, and in which a bust of Shakspere faces a bust of the duke. They see Palestine with the aid of lantern-slides. So may we hope to enjoy our leisure in a better world.

"Your Grace will come and see us soon, I feel sure. I do not press. The multifarious duties of the present moment—I know something of their claims. But some questions are urgent. Our wilder spirits in the reading-room are getting up a round-robin for beer."

"Very sad!"

"I was glad when the pitmen who came to the procession went back to their homes. They do our people no good. Happily, cock-fighting on bank-holidays is a purely acquired taste."

"I suppose I ought to like him, Mary," said the duchess, when he had turned his back; "but somehow—well, I dare say he is quite a good man."

"Mr. Bascomb is my favorite," returned Mary. "See, here he comes through the gate. I wish the other looked a little less sure both of earth and heaven. Dear old Bas! His hold on earth is of the weakest. He contrives to look untidy in spite of a

cassock that hides him from head to foot. Even a man, one would think, could hardly go wrong with an overall of that sort. But only look at the buttons—all in the wrong holes!"

"Ah, men are just as clever in muddle as in all else. One of us would have blundered into the right hole midway—uncertain sex. Tell me something about him before he comes up."

"Great scholar, great gentleman," said Mary, breathlessly talking against time as the parson gained on them in his toil up the sloping walk. "Warn me when he 's within ear-shot, but remember he 's a trifle deaf."

"Go on: still half a minute to the good."

"Does n't believe there has been any Christian church to speak of for hundreds of years."

"Oh, Mary! Only ten seconds more. Make the best use of them."

"Thinks that Allonby should be melted down and spent in making everybody good."

"Why, that 's rank Social— How do you do, Mr. Bascomb? Very glad to meet you. Miss Liddicot has been saying such nice things in your praise!"

Five and forty is about his age, but his untidiness adds some ten years to the rough estimate. A skullcap worn at the back of his head, at a slope that suggests miraculous agency, gives an effect of the innocence of childhood. The state of his robe seems to show that he has been valeted by a housemaid who has mislaid her duster. The tall, spare

figure, bent with the toil of patristic learning, the high Roman cast of the face, are so many notes of the mystic. But the dreamy eyes have that in them which betokens a terrible fellow to meet in some stock-exchange concerned with the transactions of another world.

He smiled affectionately at Mary and took her hand, first making his bow to the duchess, not without grace. This done, he gazed on the new mistress of Allonby as though he had, at once, a perfect sense of her beauty and a like power of referring it to the same category of impersonal wonders of nature as the rose and the dawn.

"It is a joy to me to meet you, madam. You have so much power for good, and I am sure you are disposed to use it."

His voice is music in its intonations, as voices are wont to be when they have ever kept close touch with the spiritual harmonies of which music is made.

"I hope I may be able to make myself useful, with your help. But there seems so little to do here. It is different in town."

"Madam, we are of the earth, as well as on it. I think you will find that. Rest assured you will not languish for want of opportunity."

"Mr. Raif has promised to show me his model village."

A slight cloud passed over his features. "I have no doubt Mr. Raif has done his best with it, but somehow these questions of machinery—I shall be

pleased to take your Grace's opinion on all the villages at some future time."

The conversation soon drifted into generalities, wherein, however, he showed himself so utterly incompetent, or at any rate so ill at ease, that the duchess in mercy gave him an opportunity of escape. On leaving, he looked at her again with a kind of awe, and seemed to take her in from head to foot.

"Pray don't flatter yourself," laughs Mary. "He fixes every charming woman in that way; but half the time, you know, he forgets that they are alive. I do believe he thinks we are plants, and that one day he 'll try to break off a finger for a buttonhole. He used to lift me on to the table and look at me like some little image of piety, all the time I was in short frocks. It was done quite without distinction of persons. He treated Rose Edmer in just the same way. Dear old thing—I do love him so!"

"And so shall I. But who is Rose Edmer? You know, child, you are my guide to Allonby."

"Rose Edmer is the village beauty. Every self-respecting village has an institution of that kind."

"Then I know her perfectly well. Listen: dark-eyed as well as dark-haired; heavy-eyed, too, a little, by reason of a sort of lowering mischief in the lids. I made her show them to me all the same, for they were wide open as I passed. Trouble there, if crossed. The face a good oval, not so much by the narrowness at the chin as by the breadth at the

cheek. Lips that pout more with determination than with caprice, and that I should say might give great satisfaction in—other uses. What a little type! No, not a type at all, but just her individual self. And what an inventory, eh? Gracious! it 's like an early Victorian novel."

"That 's the girl. True as steel, I should say, if you win her; but wants winning all the same. They say George Herion is the boy to do it. It will be a pretty game, lost or won, for the onlookers."

"George Herion—I never saw him."

"Perhaps, duchess, because he never saw you, saving your presence, all the same. It 's the crisis of his fate, so I hear—and I get a bulletin almost every morning from my maid."

"No wonder. It would never do to let love-making become one of the lost arts; so let us all keep an eye on Phyllis and Corydon. Ah, what a land, what a land!"

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. The whole country seems like a book—so many 'Half Hours in a Library,' illustrated with copperplates, as much too picturesquely good to be true as a scene at the play. That feeling, I remember, came on me with a perfect rush at Warwick. I saw old beadsmen in cloaks that suggested the funeral procession of Queen Elizabeth, walking in and out of old almshouses to match, with an old Shaksperian square in the background. I declare, when some incongruous old thing in an

overcoat and a stovepipe hat came out of one of the houses I could have shaken him for an anachronism. And in the market-place I believe they were roasting an ox whole, and hiring plowmen and dairymaids at a 'statute' fair."

"But how would you hire them, Augusta? You know that 's the proper way."

"Who said it was not? What a dear old land!"

"How do they hire them in your country, then?"

"How do I know—or care? Not that way, that 's all. No such luck."

"What a funny sort of country it must be!"

"No, no. It just spreads itself about too much to be anything in particular. This one is perfect, and if I had my way I 'd put it all under a glass case. Our glass case is the sky, and that 's too big for comfort to the beholder. How are you going to keep the dust off five and twenty miles of corn all in one unbroken line? What you lose in breadth you gain in variety, intensity of impression. A dozen 'vestiges of creation' is a space no bigger than the back of your hand! I want to label it all. At least, Mary, help me to label out the 'county,' that mysterious thing you were telling me about the other day; the people to whom I have to go and 'pay my respects' in the family coach, in return for their dutiful performances of the same sort here."

"Well, first you want two big glass cases—one for our set and one more for the other."

"Tell me about the other. Our set I am begin-

ning to know—birth, acres, long settlement. Oh, I am so frightened of some of them, Mary! But don't you dare tell. I 'm going to manage them by springing right into the cage, firing my pistol, and keeping them too busy with the trick to have time to devour me."

"They don't want to devour you, except in the way of kindness—nice as you would be."

"Nonsense. I 'm certain that venerable nobleman (is n't that the right way to put it?) to whose place I went the other day was a man-eater. Not a sign was wanting—the long, solemn face, the sepulchral voice, the lean family drawn up behind, in their huge cavern of a drawing-room, waiting for their prey."

"Don't be so unkind. That 's just what you 'll find at Liddicot, I warn you, when you come to see us in our moated hall. How can people help being a thousand years old?"

"Child, you know I don't mean that."

"Besides, the Ogrebys and ourselves are just old-timers; we don't set up for being smart. But you 'll find plenty of nice people quite up to date, I assure you. Why, look at Allonby itself!"

"Still, Allonby is sometimes rather alarming. I stumbled into the family mausoleum the other day, railed off from the rest of the church. What a scare—all the effigies still glaring mastery over the destinies of men from sightless orbs! Another Temple of the Sun, with the embalmed Incas all in rows from the beginning of a dateless line—except

that the Incas sat up to their work. And then, what about the people who are not nice?"

"Oh, you 'll soon know more than you want about them. They 're the real danger. You 'll find it hard to keep out of their clutches, duchess as you are."

"Are they so very hateful?"

"Dreadful people. They 've made all their money in business, heaps and heaps of it; and where we are in any way salable they just come and buy us out. Sometimes they issue us as companies, with our names on the prospectus."

"Insolent creatures; and with their own money, too!"

"You don't understand, Augusta; but you will."

"Silent contempt?"

"How are you to keep it up, when they make such a noise? There 's a terror of a man down here called Kisbye who tried his hardest to get a corner in your procession the other day. His house-parties are a perfect scandal, and he 's got the very place in which the Parringtons were born."

"Well, it 's easy enough to keep out of it now."

"Not so easy as you think. He tries to do everything, from the shooting to the dinners, twice as well as everybody else, so far as the mere luxury goes. And some of our younger sons positively go there for the dinners. Why, even my brother Tom—oh, it 's a shame! And they make game of it all when they come away."

"And we both think that 's a greater shame still;

don't we, Mary? But don't be afraid: I am going to be perfectly orthodox and hate Kisbye. Only just now I am much busier with attractions than repulsions. I do so want to like everybody, the women above all."

"What is to prevent it? I am sure they all want to like you."

"Sometimes they seem so—"

"So what?"

"So near and yet so far, like the star in the song —so effusively indifferent, so cordially cold."

"Augusta!"

"Oh, don't misunderstand. It 's nothing personal, to you especially—not even to myself. I am sure they all treat me exactly as they treat one another. But their aloofness is sometimes a trial. I suppose it 's the smart manner. They don't seem to care a hang for anybody or anything. Yet underneath that mask of cynical hardness what wonderful women some of them are! They know so much, and they 've seen so much, and they 've even thought and felt so much, and they seem so very much ashamed of it, after all. That hard, short, dry style I 've seen in one or two here! None of us women are like that by nature—mere souls reduced to the state of an anatomical preparation. Why should we make ourselves such pieces of bad art?"

"I never thought of that. I suppose it must be so, since you see it so. I wonder if it is because they are trying to please the men? I remember,

now, how Tom changed as soon as he went to Eton: not much kissing good-by and kissing how-d'-ye-do after that. He did give me a furtive hug behind the door at the end of the first term; but it was too good to last. Our men, you see, won't stand what they call 'gush.' Will yours?"

"We never ask 'em," said Augusta, simply. "They have to take us as we are. It does them a world of good."

"That 's it, I suppose. You never let them get out of hand. I wonder if they don't like you all the better for just being yourselves, instead of trying to talk golf and races and stables to them, and all that."

"They like us well enough," said Augusta, as simply as before. "But never mind, dear. 'When you are in Rome'—you know the rest. And I 'm going to get Anglicized as fast as I can."

"Take care we don't get Americanized first and save you the trouble."

"No; my turn first. Come and help me out with my visiting-list. Here 's a Blyth, I see."

"Excuse me, but would you mind not sounding the 'th'? You know you asked me to mention any little thing of that sort."

"Thank you a thousand times; but shall I never call a fellow-creature by his right name in this country? I learned 'Coohoon' and 'Chumley' and 'Abergenny' from a Sunday paper before I came out, and I thought I was through. The rule of it, the distracting rule? Shade of Ward McAllister,

will nobody give me a glimpse into first principles? Is it something like this: always sound one Englishman's name as some other Englishman writes his? I suppose we must be 'Applebys,' as we begin with an 'Al'; and Halifax is sounded as 'Gomshall,' dear —say it is; and 'Waldegrave' as 'Zoroaster,' by way of giving a neighbor a lift."

"Augusta, you are really unfortunate to-day! It 's 'Walgrave,' at any rate, as true as I live."

"Mary, Mary, we 've gossiped away half the morning, and we 've a whole house-party on our hands. Besides, I must have a first peep at the village this afternoon."

"Which one—Mr. Raif's?"

"No; little Slocum. That 's more to my taste. But he may come all the same, if it 's part of his show."

VII

IT was no easy matter. In these exalted regions the simplest incident has to be contrived. A duchess from Allonby can hardly walk into Slocum Parva as you or I do. Nothing merely occurs in such lives: everything is matter of specification. Mr. Jarvis had to be consulted about the carriage, and he put the priceless ponies in harness by way of giving them an airing. Her Grace would fain have walked, but she was told it was unusual in the circumstances. Then the housekeeper was sent for. In such houses domestics are as keenly concerned for the privilege of menial office as are nobles in a court of claims contending for their right of bearing a towel or a pair of spurs at a coronation. In vain may the unhappy object of their attentions wish them at the devil. It is their "perquisite," not his luxury, and the thing is done for the doer's sake. Custom ordained a hamperful of goodies and physic whenever a Duchess of Allonby went among her subjects for the first time.

"You may go in an old frock and a waterproof later on," said Mary, as she stepped in after her friend. Augusta sighed and took the reins. Mr. Raif and a man in livery were in the rear.

The Yellow Van

The drive in the fresh air, stirred by a rush from a gap in the distant hills and cooled by a recent shower, was exhilarating. The road was all vistas contrived by centuries of landscape-gardening on the grand scale. The village looked as blandly beautiful as a mezzotint. Where the red tile failed, brown thatch continued the curves of the exquisitely broken line. A glory of honeysuckle and other climbers covered window and porch; the garden patchés were in their later and richer bloom. A lady, apparently on her travels in search of the picturesque, rose from her easel and bowed as the duchess passed. The children were still at their lessons, but a shuffle of feet as the carriage skirted the school seemed to betoken the spontaneous disruption of a class. Their mothers meekly awaited developments in the gloom of interiors, as though following some ritual of becoming behavior for the Last Day.

Mr. Raif made a good showman. The carriage stopped here and there as he gave the word, and the duchess saw tidy homes adorned with chromolithographs of the royal family, bright furniture, and clean-aproned matrons bobbing reverence from the knees, for want of mastery of the art of lateral extension. It distressed her. "Please don't be so respectful," she said at first, until she saw that, with their training, it gave them even more embarrassment to withhold than her to accept. Then she yielded with one sigh more. And besides, resistance was not in the spirit of a scene which

seemed to put to shame the placard of a county paper outside the grocer's shop announcing battle, murder, and sudden death in other parts of the earth.

At a turn of the road a bent figure of age came in sight. It was the octogenarian Skett, the broken-down navvy whose acquaintance as one of the non-descripts of village life we have already made. He dragged himself homeward with the help of his two walking-sticks and of a pair of lower limbs which seemed ready at any moment to strike work for life.

"Poor old man!" cried her Grace, reining in the ponies. "Open the hamper, James, and see what you think he would like."

"Quite unnecessary, duchess," said Mr. Raif, rather hastily; "he is well provided for, and I 'm afraid he is not much of a man for dainties."

"Tell me something about him."

"There is really little to tell. He was a good, honest, hard-working fellow in his day, though not very saving, I 'm afraid; and we do what we can for him now."

"What do you do?"

"I don't quite know," returned Mr. Raif, in some confusion, "but I can easily find out."

"And where is your cottage, old man?" said her Benevolence—perhaps by way of protest against that tyranny of the middleman which is the curse of our time.

But Mr. Raif was not easily baffled. "He lives

alone; and I am afraid your Grace might hardly care—"

"It ain't nor a stone's-throw, neyther," piped Samson, "if anybody 's a mind to come and see a feller-creetur." There was desperation in his manner; the vision splendid was not to be suffered to fade without a struggle for better acquaintance.

"May I come?" said the duchess.

"And thank you kindly, if you don't mind walking," returned this more terrible infant of second infancy: "you got good legs."

The duchess evidently bore no malice; Mr. Raif looked unutterable horror.

It was one of a row of brick-built cottages in the execrable taste of most modern work of this kind. They formed a sort of back street for the village, and their manifest avoidance of all outward display bore the suggestion that even in Slocum there was something not meant to meet the eye. Their sites were part of a clearance made by the old duke in accordance with the general policy of keeping down population by keeping down house-room. But the old duke had cut it too fine, and had destroyed so rashly that his successor had been obliged to build again to house his own laborers. Still the area of ruin exceeded the area of restoration; and the population of Slocum was smaller in our period than it had been at the close of the middle ages. It had finally attained to that state of perfect numerical balance which is the glory of the statistical tables of France. The governing

idea of the modern scheme of architecture was the upturned box with holes in it, the smaller openings as windows, the larger as doors. A lower box, if it may be so described, was the day-room, an upper the bedroom, and the two made a building which might serve to remind a Chicago sky-scraper of the modesty of its origin. The doors were an unnecessarily close fit for the inquisitive figures by whom they were now filled. One of the latter, Mrs. Artifex, seeing what company Samson was about to entertain, now came into his cottage to "speak up for him" in conjunctures wherein his own modesty or his own courage as a petitioner for charitable favors might be expected to fail. The principle imported a future exchange of good offices of the same sort on his part.

His room was untidy. It was the penalty of age and infirmity with him, as with most of his neighbors. Their partners were mostly in the churchyard. Their young people had gone to fight for themselves in the world. The old were the mere wastage of the settlement, kept there only because they refused to enter the workhouse, and on a scanty allowance of outdoor relief by which the guardians made a reasonable bargain for the ratepayers.

Samson's way of doing the honors was all his own.

"Sit ye down, my loidy; here be old Sam Skett a-waitin' his call—all that 's left on him, all that 's left!"

"Remember where you are, Skett," said Mr. Raif, severely; "that 's hardly the way to speak to her Grace."

"Oh, please let him speak as he likes," said Augusta; "he won't hurt me."

"You be a beauty, an' no mistake," cried the delighted old man. It was a tribute to moral quite as much as to physical worth. Mr. Raif cast protesting eyes upward, and a still more protesting chin.

It was easy to see that Samson's manners had stood in the way of his advancement in life. He was not one of the courtly poor, and his obtuseness left him beyond the reach of Mr. Raif's art as an introducer of indigence to the notice of the great. Most of his neighbors in this row were in the same plight. Mr. Raif's choicer specimens were the trained bands of the model village within the domain, and the select few of Slocum Parva whom he had just left. These had become, under his tuition, as sleek as any peasants in old china. Poor Skett was but the ignoble savage of the rural scene. He was still magnificent in his ruin—a giant in beam, well-nigh as broad as long, and not short at that. And nature seemed again to assert his brotherhood with the ox in the great flat face, and in the neck all dewlapped with wrinkles. The blue eye, bleared though it was with age, betokened the Frisian peasant of almost pure descent. His brown skin was a diaper of the seams of age and toil which made him look like something in rhinoceros hide.

His history was that of many an English laborer of his day. He was one of the earth-men of our railway age, and he had left his lasting mark on the planet with pick and shovel. He had read nothing, —for the best of all reasons,—thought nothing, hoped nothing, but had just dug, fed, and slept. It was enough for pride. "Worked on the first railway made in this warld," he piped, "an' worked all over the country after that. Aye, an' my own brother went to a place called France an' Spain to make more railways there under Muster Middlemass—old Middlemass—whose son 's a lord now. You 'll find that reet."

"What a fine strong man you must have been!" said the duchess.

The compliment gave Sally an opening for the neighborly office of the song of praise. "Aye, your Grace, 'e wur a good un in 's time—could wheel six 'undredweight. 'Is old feyther wur a good un too. Made nothin' o' liftin' up a 'undred in each 'and."

"Aye, an' used to win beer wi' it," muttered Samson, as though editing her with notes.

"Well, this 'ere man 'e could lift fifty more. 'Never give in'—that was 'is motter; 'e was real cruel at 's work. Took a job on the roads when 'e 'ad to give up his navvyin', an' one day, when 'e wur over seventy, they finds 'im lyin' in a faint beside 's load o' stone."

"I 'ad n't give in, mind yer," annotated Samson. "I 'd been knocked out o' time. Ricked ma back—that 's what a did."

"Aye," interposed Sally; "an' thowt nothin' o' buttin' 'is 'ead through the panel of a door, in 's prime."

"Don't you tell tales out of school," said Samson, shyly; "young men will be young men."

It was honored age rebuking an untimely allusion to the follies of youth. He felt that it was a generous folly still, and that he had lived it down.

"Well, I hope you are comfortable now."

"Two an' six a week from the parish, an' sixpence extry for coals in the bitter weather. Got to be careful—rent out of it, and every blessed thing."

"He 's so lonesome, your Grace," said Mrs. Artifex; "that 's the worst on 't. Fell out o' bed t' other night, an' cut 'is face."

"It war n't nowt," he chuckled. "Why, old Grutt 'e 'urt 'isself same way a month ago, an' he ain't well yet."

Mr. Raif was manifestly ill at ease. It was not exactly the show for a mistress of Allonby; and he made a move for the door.

The duchess was content to follow, but she wished first to make the old man a present, and she fumbled at her purse. There were difficulties. She had yet to attain to full mastery of the value of the coins in it, for the British monetary system is not exactly a thing that comes by the light of nature. If half a crown a week kept him going, it would perhaps be unadvisable to give him so much. But what was half a crown? It was more bewildering, in the

circumstances, than Peel's: "What is a pound?" She pecked wildly therefore, at the first thing that came to hand—a florin, as it proved. Then—how to offer it to him without wounding his self-respect? With her lifelong associations, she had scruples on this point which had not been wholly overcome by her short experience of European travel. The good things in her hamper were, after all, mere presents of courtesy, if you chose to look on them in that light; but a tip in hard cash to one who had been a workman, and was no tramp of the roadside!

"Would you allow me to offer you a little—a little change?" she said timidly, slipping the florin into his palm of horn.

To her intense relief, Samson did not hurl it to the ground with the pride of the free-born. He only said, "Thank ye kindly," and fobbed it with the avidity of a Tantalus who has unexpectedly caught a bite.

Mr. Raif looked vainly round for a diversion, until it came by the mere compulsion of his desire, as they passed one of the honeysuckle cottages on their way to the carriage.

A neatly dressed girl was standing in the porch, half hidden in its shade, and evidently keeping an eye on the road.

The duchess whispered to her friend: "Why, surely, Mary, it is your village beauty, Rose—Rose—"

"Rose Edmer. Oh, is n't it funny! She 's wait-

ing to catch a glimpse of him on his way home from work; and she 'll vanish as soon as he comes in sight. She 's dairymaid at Allonby, you know,—one of your people,—and he a laborer at Kisbye's—you remember George Herion, the young fellow I told you about to-day. Do speak to her, Augusta. She is so sweet."

It was an unfortunate moment for an introduction, for Rose wanted anything but company, even, as we have seen, the company of George. She was in the earliest and perhaps the most entrancing stage of the divine complaint. George's love for her, admiration for her, was her first initiation into love and admiration for herself. Hitherto she had been a chit of a girl, half aware, or scarcely aware at all, that she was anything out of the common. He had lifted her into the fullness of the realization of personality, and had brought into her soul the exquisite delight of the feeling that she was part of the beauty of the world. From this came wonder, pride, joy in herself—nay, a kind of reverence of her own girlhood. Oh, the music of it! All the things she had done before, not knowing there was anything in them,—fetching water from the well (he had spoken with a rude rapture of her beauty as she stood there), plucking berries from the garden for the meal,—were now sanctified as so many things that gave her a part in life. She had grown from child to essential woman in a night, with the thought of that part. She loved George—though as yet she was in no hurry to tell him so

—for loving her. Of course she was in no hurry. What joy to go on forever like this, to be merely courted and adored!

And, besides, she must not make herself too cheap. There was always that dreadful warning of her mate in the dairy, Silly Jane. Jane, yet little more than a child, had suddenly found love in the confession of a stable-boy of much the same standing, and had forthwith called her playmates about her to make solemn renunciation of childish things. There could be no more hide-and-seek, or skipping-rope: she had a sweetheart now. The ceremony included the refusal of her dinner as a public function. She wanted nothing but a slice of bread and butter, and the right to sing softly to herself all day long. The whole village knew it: it was a jest at the Knuckle of Veal. Then one day, goaded thereto perhaps by the banter of the inn, the stable-boy, without a word of warning, gave a penny to an infant, and told her to seek Silly Jane with the message that he had had enough of her. The message was duly delivered before a whole household, and for a day or two Jane's parents thought it prudent to keep watch on the well. The precaution was unnecessary. Silly Jane resumed her dinner and her skipping-rope, not much the worse, except that she was more of a laughing-stock than ever. Better death than that fate for Rose. So, as Mr. Raif opened the garden gate to summon her to the presence of the duchess, she abruptly fled from the porch, and locked herself

in her chamber, with a determination to die rather than meet any lady in the land.

Yet, in spite of this agreeable diversion, Mr. Raif's feelings were doomed to yet another shock. The ponies were in full trot for the castle when they showed a disposition to shy at a strange object surrounded by awe-struck urchins on the village green. It was a huge covered van of the kind used by traveling showmen; it was painted in bright aggressive yellow, and it bore the announcement of a "Lecture on the Land and the People" for that very night. The mystery was deepened by the circumstance that the vehicle was as yet hermetically closed, and that, having no horse in the shafts, and to all appearance no human being in charge, it gave not a sign of life.

"What *does* it mean?" said Mary.

"Radicals, I am very much afraid," said Mr. Raif.

VIII



HE yellow van had decidedly stolen a march on Slocum Parva. None paid heed to it as it entered the village, because it looked so much like a van conveying a fat lady to business at a distant fair. But the wiser sort soon saw reason to repent of their indifference. The placards calling for "the restoration of the land to the people and of the people to the land," and the aggressively displayed opinions of eminent persons on this subject, told their own tale. The worst sign of all was that the vehicle had stopped as on a camping-ground, its driver, after releasing the old horse, having gone off in search of quarters for the night. So much, and no more, was to be learned from the awe-struck urchins beginning to cluster about the door.

The duchess pulled up, and she was for staying to hear the lecture; but on this point Mary came to the aid of Mr. Raif:

"You really must n't think of such a thing, Augusta. It would never do down here. Only fancy a Duchess of Allonby taking notice of a thing like that! Don't you know what it means?"

"How can I, until I hear what it says?"

"I feel sure it would annoy the duke."

The duchess flicked the ponies without another word, and Slocum Parva was left to the full enjoyment of its mystery.

No sound came from the van for some time, but at length the patience of the youthful watchers was rewarded by an infant's wail within, and finally by the sight of a gentle face at the doorway, as its owner, the wife and mother, offered a penny to any one who would fetch her a pail of water. The apparition, however, was too alarming, and it had the momentary effect of dispersing the whole swarm in hasty flight.

There was really nothing to be afraid of. The little house on wheels was but the mission van of a "movement," and it had come out this year, after its wont, for its village campaign against the feudal system. Its fortunes were nearly always the same—apathy and fear on the part of the peasantry, a contemptuous refusal to fight on the part of the feudal system, and that most plentiful lack of funds which in England necessarily attends undertakings still awaiting the patronage of the nobility. Nobody made anything by the society. Its itinerant lecturers worked for only as much as would keep body and soul together; but they, and its whole tiny frame, were kept going by a band of enthusiasts who maintained the subscription lists at a level of mediocrity. It was an interesting situation: on the one hand, a still vigorous growth of law and custom covering all England, and on the other this little

thing in yellow, assuredly the tiniest engine of war ever sent out against a giant power intrenched in its pride. For comparison, a catapult against the rock of Gibraltar might serve our turn.

In due course the lecturer reappeared, and his wife passed the baby to him across the hutch for a run in the open air. He was a tall, well-knit young fellow, with regular features, and with the orator's potential flash in the light of his eye. The whole manner of him betokened a way of managing crowds. He dispersed the returning infants with a peremptory "Be off with you, and tell your fathers to come to the meeting when your mothers have put you to bed," at the same time presenting his wife to the gathering audience with apologies because it was "not a gipsy this time."

"I 've found a chairman, Amy, and a place for the van, too—both birds with one stone. He 'll let us a whole field for the night for eighteenpence, so we sha'n't do badly at that. But there 'll be two miles to travel still."

"Get it over as soon as you can," said the wife, "or it will be another twelve-o'clock job; and one does bob about so in those fields in the dark."

"Anything since I went away?"

"No, dear; the same jokes about the van."

"I fancy I hear them now, especially when they are thrown at the window, and only miss it because they are aimed."

"I think I heard somebody call it a 'yaller-fever' van."

"That 's new; we must be thankful for small mercies on the road. We 've known what it is to trace the same joke, with local variations, all the way from Land's End to John o' Groat's. Have n't us, old girl?"

"I think I 'll put baby to bed. She does keep so wakeful, unless she goes off before the chairman's speech."

The infant, now chasing an inquisitive duck with some prospect of success, was herself chased, captured, and carried into the van, not without protests of the usual kind. Her father, however, soon turned the current of her thoughts by opening the door and bringing out the materials of his platform, which he put in position in front of the van. This done, he gave the child a farewell kiss for the night, and then, closing the door on his family, laid aside the husband and parent to become the tribune of the people.

His first care was to beckon a rugged figure from the crowd, and, having hauled his man up to the platform, to propose him as chairman of the meeting. The election of this functionary was duly put to the assembly, and was supposed to be carried by the remark, "Why, blest if it ain't old Spurr!" The lecturer had made his choice with judgment, for the sight of the familiar form of the farmer of a small patch in the neighborhood, who toiled for all the days of the year, and for all the feasts of the church, to make his rent, had a distinctly reassuring effect on the electorate. They seemed to draw some-

what less close to one another and closer to the van. As a mere stranger the lecturer would certainly have lacked magnetism, in spite of his plausible ways.

The two who drew closest were George Herion and Rose, who had paused in momentary interruption of their evening stroll. These and a few more stood for the modest villainage of the place, while, a little apart from them, Ness the gamekeeper and Constable Peascod seemed to represent the feudal system, vigilant, and perhaps somewhat overmanned. For by their side was Mr. Grimber, the retired tradesman who always supported the landed interest, with Mr. Kisbye, the London gentleman in business who rented the adjacent hall. The latter surveyed the scene from the elevation of horseback, from time to time making suggestive play with his whip-handle on a well-booted leg.

Mr. Spurr made a model chairman. He showed no disposition to take the bread out of the mouth of the speakers that were to follow him. His oratorical generalities on the land question were decidedly a failure, perhaps by reason of his opening statement that in assuming his present position he did not mean no offense to nobody. So many people was poor, and so many was working their 'earts out at the same time, that he thought there might be no 'arm in giving something new a bit of a trial. He did not wish to go beyond that. In the look and manner of him he suggested Job pleading for a dab of ointment, just by way of experiment. If

it failed, one would still be strengthened for resignation to the sores.

"A tell you true, neighbors, A cannot make ma rent and fill ma belly. If A don't send every bit to market, A 'm behind'and, and A 'm sometimes glad to get a lick o' lard for ma bread. So now A 'll ask yew to 'ear this young man."

None of the country dialect is now pure. The free communication between county and county, and, above all, between county and London, has spoiled all. It is but a hash of the old local form intermingled with abundant cockneyisms to spoil the dish. You may hear bits of Somerset in the eastern counties and bits of Northumbrian at the Land's End. It is not even consistent with itself. The same speaker will, almost in the same breath, use one and the same word in its townish setting and in the earlier country one to which he was born. The school boards are more especially responsible for that.

The lecturer swung into his place, and in a moment or two had got into his stride. He took them all in from beneath pent brows, and seemed to know where to pitch his voice for laughter, and even for a tear at need. "You are a landless people," that was the burden of it, "and while you are landless you must be poor. If anything happened to your manufactures to-morrow, and something is going to happen before long, you would be on your beam-ends. But the town won't be able to save the country forever, and we shall all starve together if we don't look out."

"Oh, shall we?"

The interruption raised a laugh, and so, apparently, answered the sole purpose of the inevitable wag of the meeting. It was uttered in a kind of squeak, and it might have come from one of a group of stable-boys belonging to the castle. It is impossible to be more precise, such was the author's mastery of the artifice of "throwing the voice."

"No other civilized folk in the world is quite such a stranger to its own soil as you are. Some five hundred members of the peerage own a third of the workable acreage of the whole country. The rest of us have to take our luck in a kind of raffle for what is left. Most of the land is kept as a rich man's toy, for ornament and not for use, for parks and gardens, game-preserves, and the devil knows what. A good deal of it is owned by the Stock Exchange, even when it seems to be owned by the nobility and gentry. These other gentry in the city have too much fellow-creature in the way of business, and they like to hear the cuckoo for a change."

The voice: "Cuckoo!"

The lecturer, evidently a seasoned campaigner, was not to be stopped in his rush.

"Most of the big owners can live on their investments in every good thing that is going, from China to Peru. They don't want to live by the land. Even if it 's worked for a profit, it won't keep the three that have to live out of it, owner, farmer, and laborer, so the laboring-man has to go to the wall. He still gets his wages in shillings, in an age when

there 's no keeping soul and body together without a bit of gold. Have it or leave it, they don't want you as husbandmen. They lay down the land in pasture, and tell you to go to the towns, and you have to go, whether you like it or not. I defy you to find a single acre to live on, or to live by, without their good leave. Try to start a business in a village, or to tickle the fields into a harvest on your own account, and see what they 'll say to you as lords of the soil. How many did Slocum Magna keep in the old days? We know it by the records—three times the number it keeps now. Look at the size of the old church."

The voice, whose method seemed to be simplicity itself:

"Just look at it now!"

The chairman: " 'Old yer tongue, will 'ee?"

It was a little too much, even for the lecturer.

"One at a time, gentlemen; but flunkies next turn, with all my heart." It won the laugh and—peace.

"The feudal system has come down to you without a break, except in its forms, and the new one is worse than the old. The old lord had duties, and he paid for the right of owning his fellow-creatures by finding men and money for the service of the state. The new one has only his rights, and the chief of them is to keep the smoke of a poor man's chimney out of his sight. What the nobles did not want was left as waste land for the poor, and there was a living to be made out of it. How much is

left now? Every inch is mapped and owned—and come if you dare! Saxon chiefs or Norman lords in the fullness of their power were not in it with the landowner of to-day. He has got you, body and soul. The parson is actually his nominee, and often his poor relation. The farmers, who are almost the only employers of labor besides himself, are his tenants at will, and possibly his debtors. The tradespeople of the village rent under him, and even if they don't they can be ruined by his frown. The laborers live in his cottages, and are absolutely at his mercy for the privilege of hiring a bit of allotment land—hiring, not owning; mark that well! He is usually the magistrate; and so he and his administer the law that should stand between you both."

He went on without further interruption until a cry of "Daddy!" from the domestic apartments of the van was smothered before it could obtain complete utterance. Such as it was, it occasioned another break in the magnetic current, and he had to hurry on to save the situation:

"Till the other day you had less local government in the villages than they had for centuries before and for centuries after the Conquest. But mark this: next spring Slocum Parva is going to elect its first parish council, and to come into line with the rest of the country. Make the most of it. Try to do a little bit for yourselves. Put your own men in, and your own women, too, if you can find any willing to stand, and do your best in your day of

small things, hoping that the great will come. Better late than never. Who 'll stand when the time comes, and who 'll work for it now?"

"I 'm your man, master!" cried George Herion. "Put me down."

The crowd seemed thunderstruck by this unexpected declaration, and Constable Peascod made an entry in his note-book, as though to take the speaker at his word. Mr. Kisbye glared. It was the only other sign of animation. Not a peasant of them spoke, or even stirred to look at George. The lad had shown some excitement during the speech, but even the few who had noticed it never expected this. He was now, for the moment, awed into silence by his own temerity, though he still flushed defiance and resolve. There was intense anguish in the eyes of Rose. The manhood of Slocum Parva at length took courage to pretend to be idly busy in lighting its pipe, while it eyed the constituted authority of squire and policeman over the grimy edge of the bowl. Finally Mrs. Artifex ventured on a fatuous "That do seem roight." This, however, was hardly enough for the business of the meeting, and the lecturer resumed:

"Does anybody want to ask a question?"

Nobody wanted to ask a question.

"Does anybody want to oppose?"

The manhood received this much as it was in the habit of receiving the courteous invitation to try a fall with the wrestler at the local fair.

The meeting was melting away at its edges. The

children, losing their respect for the invader, began to eye the supports of his platform with manifest intent. Mr. Kisbye again tapped his leg, this time as though he loved it.

"You rascal," he cried, pointing a threatening whip at the lecturer, "I warn you, and I warn all your dupes, that if you do a single illegal act, or say a single illegal word, you 'll hear of it. Peascod, keep an eye on that man. As for you, you whelp," turning to George, "never let me see your face again on my place!"

Perfect silence fell once more on the meeting, and every footfall told as a threat as the speaker rode away.

"There, George," wailed the poor village beauty, "you 've done it now! And what 'll they say at the castle if they know I was in this night's work?"

The young fellow looked uncommonly foolish. "My blood was on fire," he said.

"And I 've caught a chill," cried the girl, trying to frown in pettish displeasure, and then bursting into tears and running away.

It was again one of those moments, like that which had just passed, when everything seemed to hang on the pure hazard of a lead. The lecturer naturally wished to rally his meeting. He had his short way with the landed interest to propose in the form of a resolution. He had also to thank his chairman in the same manner. But Mr. Kisbye had hardly passed out of sight and hearing when another clatter of hoofs came, from the distance this

time, as though he had only gone to fetch up his reserves, and a turn of the road brought two of the castle drags in view.

It was a fragment of the ducal party—house and other—hurrying back to dress for dinner after a day's shooting; in other words, the feudal system in full trot for the scene of the meeting. The awe-struck villagers could distinguish the Liddicots, Beuceys, Lavertons, Mohants, Neves, and Incledons from the neighboring strongholds of social power, as they sped by, chatting in music on the day's sport. It was the leadership of the land in a nut-shell—Parliament, office, military command, satrapies, wealth, worship, and power in some of their most imposing forms. Herbert Peascod stood at the salute, and most of the others involuntarily followed his example in their own way. The system was not unobservant of the meeting and of the van, and its laughter, which was not much more than a smile made audible, betokened a turn in the current of thoughts that were still pleasant from first to last. The lecturer, who had gazed with the rest, turned to rally his meeting, but found that the village green was all his own.

IX

"NOW, then, Amy, off we go! Two mile to bedtime."

The lecturer entered the van on tiptoe, and gazed tenderly at a bundle of bedding securely tied to a shelf. It contained his only child.

"Has n't she gone off nicely?" said the wife, adjusting the clothes. "I was afraid when the man on horseback began to shout. Who was he?"

"Oh, only one of the heathen. She 'll get used to them soon. He cut us out of our vote, though, and out of our sale of literature. If we could have postponed him for five minutes we should have been eighteenpence to the good."

He put the horse in, while his wife made all tight for the jolting journey before them by extinguishing the lamp and wedging it and the crockery into a padded box.

"Hold tight, Amy! Gee up, Tom!"

The vehicle started with a creak, and the wife sat still in the darkness, with one hand on the precious bundle, and the other on a hat-peg.

Agitators are supposed to revel on the fat of the land, but in truth the public cause has only too little of this delicacy to spare for its rank and file.

The Yellow Van

The Tommys of the social war have as hard a lot as those who carry a musket in the other one; and they are to be counted happy if the balance of the day's operations leaves them with a whole skin and a ration. They have their liberty, though, or what they take for such, which is just as good. The people on the road grow fewer and fewer, for civilization means a postal address. The wandering Kirghiz, with his tent of felt and his old freedom of the Asian plains, is now circumscribed by law and order; and his pitch, and count of cattle, have become items of entry in the note-book of a Muscovite policeman. The immigrant-wagon has made way for the immigrant-train. Soon the last king of the gipsies, or perhaps the last commoner, for the monarchs of the tribe generally lead the way into shopkeeping, will boil his last kettle by his last roadside, and sink to obscurity in a slum. Meanwhile the van is the camel of our deserts of mansuetude, and a home of a kind for those prophets of struggling causes who escape stoning only by keeping perpetually on the go.

The opening of a gate, and a new variety of jolt that marked the change from macadam to grass, showed that they had reached their journey's end.

Old Spurr, the chairman of the meeting, was in waiting with his lantern; and his wild figure, in the shirt-sleeves which formed the full dress of his everlasting labor, was revealed in rugged effects of light and shade as he guided them to their place for the night.

"Come to back o' t' 'ouse; ye 'll be more out of the way loike in t' other field. He 'll be up early, and sniffin' about."

"Who?"

"Squoire Kisbye."

"What has he to do with it?"

"Well, if you gets off in good time in the morning, I dussay you 'll never know. Here, tek this," he added with a shamefaced air, laying a small basket on the van. "The wife sent ye a quart o' milk and a few eggs. Need n't say nothin' about it, if anybody asks. Ye 're supposed to pay for everything here."

Amy went in to thank her hostess and to complete her modest shopping for the day. Meanwhile the horse was taken out of the shafts and turned loose in the field, where, late as it was, he woke the echoes with a thunderous gallop which signalized his sense of freedom. When the wife returned, the old man cried a cheery good night, and the wanderers were left alone.

One charm of van life lies in its frequent surprises. It seems to promise nothing, while it offers everything by turns. This poor little inclosure of nine feet by seven was, at a pinch, kitchen, dining-room, nursery, and even library and drawing-room, though, as to the last, perhaps it was rather the parlor sitting-room of lodgings at the seaside. It was also a bedroom; and, for purposes of argument, if not of use, it had even a sort of upper floor, in fact garrets, at a pinch.

The housewife now drew forth the kerosene-lamp and the tiny cooking-stove, neither of which could be lighted with safety until the vehicle was at rest. The next thing was to draw the curtains and make all snug. It was not to be done in a moment. There was a window in each of the four sides, and each window had a pair of muslin curtains for the daytime, and of serge for the night. A skylight was left unveiled, on the consideration that the stars were not to be suspected of impertinent curiosity. The windows were but eighteen inches square, and their curtains being cut to measure, they had a ridiculous air of being in short clothes.

The larder stood confessed in an open cupboard, with crockery and stores of eatables above, and with pots and pans below; and the small stove was soon in full blaze, in so far as the phrase may be used in regard to a volume of combustion positively beneath the notice of science. The peculiarity of this stove was that it would cook only one thing at a time, and even that but a dish for a table of Lilliput; so, just as the chops were beginning to frizzle, the potatoes were getting cold. The wit of man, or at any rate of that better half of him principally concerned, had not yet discovered how to serve both dishes together hot and hot. This problem, however, had the touching insistence of an unrealized ideal; and the better half was still busy over it with bent brows, while the other went to tidy up the library. This part of their almost too commodious dwelling consisted of a set of pigeonholes,

with shelves sloping downward to prevent the escape of their contents to the floor. Much of the literature of pamphlet used in the propaganda was stored here—tract "The Curse of Landlordism," a great favorite, with "The Crux of the Land Question," "Better Homes for the Workers," "Land Nationalization—Why Do We Want It?" and "The Landless Man." Besides these—such is the weakness of our nature—were a common tobacco-pipe and as common a pouch, with a cigar-box, which, however, was redeemed to finer uses as a receptacle for pen and ink. These things, as the van moved, were perpetually charging forward to the apertures, looking over the dizzy precipice below, and then rolling back baffled into the gloom of their caves. The library, as beseemed an institution devoted to the service of the mind, had stretched beyond these narrow limits, and its annex was found at the end of the vehicle, on the same shelf as the bed for the child. The nursery seemed rather dangerously near the garret window, but as the latter remained intact, the infant Amy was probably one of those wingless angels that do not kick in their sleep. In a general way she had certainly come to terms with her environment. Under her mother's brooding gaze, she slept as soundly with the van in motion as with the oratory. Exceptions excepted, the same smile of the better world which she had just left was on her face, whether the house rumbled over fresh cobbles, or some town meeting carried a resolution by the acclamation of a roar.

"I 'll lay the supper-things now, old girl, if you like."

"Please."

This operation involved the conversion of the middle part of the van into a dining-room, by unfolding a couple of deck-stools, and drawing out a table trained to subdue itself to the most demure insignificance by the management of its flaps.

The chops at least were hot; and, with a little good will, it was easy to treat the potatoes as an ice. They ate their meal to the accompaniment of the regular breathing of the child, visible rather than audible, near as they were to its cot.

Their puzzle-box was now ready for one change more. It became a bedroom by the simple expedient of emptying a linen-chest, using its lid and a supplementary flap with iron supports for the frame of the couch, and drawing a pair of curtains to make all snug within.

The lecturer went out to smoke his pipe, and finally turned in, after the horse had rubbed good night on his shoulder and received a pat in return. Soon there was perfect quiet in the van, though not exactly perfect peace. The cows in the field, with the curiosity which is said to be the bane of their sex, could not refrain from approaching the vehicle for purposes of exploration. Their deep breathing on the very walls of the tenement would have been of ghostly suggestion at this hour, had any one within been wakeful enough to hear it. But it passed unnoticed, with a direful rattle of their horns when

these were caught in momentary entanglement with the wheels. There was indeed something to hear the livelong night, as there always is in the open fields. Nature seems to wake when we sleep, and as her stars are at least more visibly busy, so her creeping and even some of her flying things are more audibly so at night. It is their fear of man perhaps, at any rate on the part of the crawling under-world, that keeps the more timorous creatures astir at unreasonable hours; and earth, that disdains him, is notoriously given to all sorts of inopportune movements.

Next morning the yellow van had resumed its travels through broad England before the moon-face of Constable Peascod appeared at the gate of the paddock. The child, sitting up in bed, was blowing a penny trumpet as they passed under the walls of Allonby. Nothing happened to the walls.

X



EORGE followed Rose from the meeting, and contrived to cut her off from her mother's cottage by taking a path which involved a trespass on private grounds. He was just in time. The road was hilly, and she was on the last rise when she found him before her. A few steps more would have brought her in sight of the cottage, and, what is more, the cottage in sight of her. Even as it was, the moon was looking on.

She was still in high displeasure, and was for passing him without a word. His passionate admiration had made a woman of her, with all a woman's claims. She had grown to it in a night and a day, from the wild girlhood of her tousled hair and her rough work at home and farm—a spiritual condition till now tempered only by the Sunday-school. The tremendous discovery that she was part of the beauty of the world had come to her quite suddenly, while yet she thought herself but a part of its strength and coarser uses. All her upbringing had fostered this depressing illusion. She had read nothing, seen nothing but the annual school treat in the castle grounds. The county town was a far

country to her; great London, another world. Then had come this fierce playmate of old to touch her into a new and wholly bewitching sense of personality with his rude deference and his honeyed tongue. Something in her had suddenly tamed him into gentleness and the wish to please, where before there had been only the rude give-and-take of the playground. And now, after all this, after the almost mystical change, he could still find time to listen to a mere spouter on the tail-board of a van. To set his blood on fire was surely her glorious privilege; and the very essence of the joy it gave was in exclusive rights. The absurdity of the position that all this involved jealousy of a public movement did not wholly escape her, but it only made the matter worse. Her rival was simply a wretched handbill, not even any accredited obstacle in flesh and blood. Added to this was the humiliation of the burst of tears which had betrayed so much. Could she ever forgive herself—or him?

"Rose!"

"Keep your own side o' the road now. You no business this side; you know it as well 's me."

This observation, which seems more properly to belong to an altercation of carters, was still very much to the purpose. It was a maxim of the common law of Slocum, in matters social, that young people of opposite sexes who wished to avoid scandal should keep opposite sides of the road. Even lovers respected it. For all who were not in that relationship it was obligatory. To ignore it was

to be "talked about." The roads were narrow,—perhaps a considerate highway board had in this way tempered the wind to the shorn lamb,—but, such as they were, travelers of this critical standing were expected to keep their left and right, though they might be going the same way. It implied no very flattering estimate of peasant manners, perhaps, but that was as it might be. The local Pyramus and Thisbe, who respected themselves and the code, had always between them this wall of atmosphere—generally a wall of darkness too, through which their confidences were as those of the wandering voice. If in the present instance the barrier of obscurity was wanting, that was the fault of the moon.

It was a beautiful scene. The plantations on each side rose and fell with the road; and their timber-crowned heights and masses of bracken in the hollows dear to the birds who were so soon to die were full of mystery. It was anybody's landscape seen in this light, though it lay in the heart of ordered England, with all its measurements recorded in a hundred deeds of settlement or parish rolls. A wild man of the woods might have seen something to remind him of home in its solid swaths of impenetrable shade, with here and there a tremulous speck of silver in the open as the brook caught a ray from above. And, after all, in spite of the records, it was perhaps as wild and unspoiled as nature had left it. The road, with its fence and its hedge, was about the only thing of human handiwork. Wild

Celtic persons had probably sought vale and slope on this very business now in hand. The Roman soldier at his post hard by may have cursed the luck that kept him a prisoner in this hole of an island while the nut-brown girl in the Campagna was consoling herself with the other man.

"Just you keep your own side!"

"Not me; I want to see you near. Oh, Rose, you 're the prettiest girl in all this world."

"'T ain't likely."

It was her way of saying that flatteries would not serve. We must excuse a certain want of art on both sides. Thus they say sweet things, and thus they reject them, in the real Arcadia. The proud setting of earth and sky seems to touch it into beauty in spite of all.

"Well, I never used to think so, sure," said the swain. "It seemed to come to me, loike, all of a sudden. Lord, I never thowt nothin' of ye, Rose, when we used to go to school."

"An' I never thought nothin' o' you no time: that 's all the difference."

"What a little tomboy you was! D'ye remember how I pulled your 'air, one day, when you collared my hoop? You got it done so nice now."

"You are a silly sheep, no mistake—baa, baa!"

"I could chop off my 'and for it now, I could. I can't tell what make me feel so. Maybe it 's the long frocks."

"Gone foolish over a print gownd! I should be 'shamed to say so, if I was a young man."

"No, it ain't that, either. It 's a somethin'-like in your eyes, an' in the way you holds yourself. I often lays awake o' nights wonderin' what it is. The fellers 'u'd laugh at me about it, if they was n't afraid o' gettin' punched. Oh, Rose, you are a beauty, no mistake. I could say my prayers to ye."

"That 's wicked. People ha' been struck dead in the Bible for less."

"It can't be. I never felt so good since I was a little kid. No gammon, Rose. I think you 're right about the sheep, though, all the same. I feel silly-like; an' then, along wi' that, I feel strong. I could punch anything, I could, if you was lookin' on. I seem to be walkin' about on buttercups. Don't you go an' tell nobody, to make a laughin'-stock o' me, or I 'll kill 'em. Oh, it 's the funniest feelin' I ever had in my life. Rose, you must have me: I 'll die if you don't."

What it lacked in fascination was made up by the kindly mother watching over all—the stars quite intent upon the scene in spite of their having so much to do elsewhere, the music of the nether-world in the faint stirrings of leaf and flower in the breeze and the fainter of creeping things, just as much interested, in their way, as their betters above.

The night was in their souls; but one of them, at least, hardly knew it. The peasant misses a good deal in using his skies only as a weather sign. His mate is often better advised.

"It 's the fine evenin' make you feel so," said the girl, as though she were commiserating a sudden

cold. She strove for sarcasm, but achieved only tenderness and pity in spite of herself. "Daytime you don't care for me."

"Why?" he asked fiercely, and crossing over to his own side.

"Takin' up with a common showman. Ain't that enough? Why, he 'll be gone to-morrer, miles away; an' then where 'll you be? He 's got no work to give away."

"I don't care about that. I 'll find work for myself."

"What work? George, George! What can such as us do when we 've offended the big folks?"

"I 'll go on the road."

"Go on the road!" she echoed faintly.

"Yes; there 's more things to peddle than little tracts about the land—pots and pans and kettles, knives and forks, needles and thread, candles and calico, tea and sugar. I 'll be a general shop on wheels—that 's what I 'll be. I 've thought over it dozen o' times when I been thinkin' of you. There 's a fortune in it. Why, there ain't no place nearer than Randsford, if you want a gridiron! I 'll take the villages for twenty mile round Allonby. It 's a fortune, sure! I can do anything in all the world if you 'll only put your 'and in mine."

No knight of old could have been prouder on his quest of giant or dragon or holy cup; no man of our day in his boast of a high ambition in church or state. All 's relative: for the scale of Slocum Parva, George Herion was a hero of romance.

It was entrancing in its perspective of high destinies, but she dared not trust herself to believe in it too soon. And, besides, she felt real alarms. Public opinion—would the gossips approve and support? Her mother?

"You could n't never do it, George. How are you goin' to get your license? Oh, it is a big world to fight in that way, an' no mistake."

"I 'll do it, no fear, if you 'll say yes."

"George, I 'm frightened for ye—only for that. Can't you wait?"

"Wait! What for—to see if Mr. Kisbye 'll take me back again?"

"Never that, George, with my will. And you know it."

"Well, then, wait for what? Wait or starve? Starve an' p'r'aps lose you! No; I 'll have your promise now, or I 'll go many a long mile afore I see you again—if ever I do."

She paled, even in the moonlight. "Many a long mile."

"Rose, mark my words; there 's goin' to be fightin' in that there place they call Africa. You remember; we 've sung it out on the maps many a time. There 'll be fightin' to see which is best man, the Queen or old Krujer. That 's where I 'll go, and good-by to your sojer-boy!"

It was decisive. Swiftly came over her the horror of the thought that her unkindness might drive him to his death; and, death or not, that, with him gone, life would fall into abysses of spiritual solitude and

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spiritual insignificance from which she could never pluck it out. There could be no life now without him to cleave to, him to cleave to her.

She was on his side of the road now, and the village Grundy missed the chance of a lifetime. She crossed to where he stood facing her, on the little bridge that spanned the gully, and threw herself sobbing on his breast. Then, suddenly raising her head, she returned his kiss of passion, and ran home without another word.

He did not try to follow her. He sat down on the stone parapet, looked up at the sky, and for the first time in his life saw that it was something more than a barometer. His whole soul was in that tumult of the sense of being which we reach in its fullness but once or twice in a lifetime. Nature is chary of the experience, for it is a revelation of her innermost secret. The great experiences will alone do it—great music, great love. And with this came a sense of the inadequacy of the thing revealed. It was not great enough for his superlative mood—rich enough, full enough. If he had known how, he could have cried out with the lover in the German song:

"Earth, hast thou no fairer flowers
Than these to show?
Sky, hast thou no orbs of fire
That brighter glow?
My heart 's so full of happiness,
It must, it will, o'erflow!"

So here we have a plowboy—quite a common plowboy—touched with gentleness, poetry, religion,

and all because a dairymaid, the right dairymaid, though a common one still, has given him a kiss. Really, really, it is almost enough to make one believe that your one valid introduction to the whole circle of arts and sciences is immortal love.

XI

IT was Augusta's first house-party at Allonby—a great trial. She was responsible as hostess, and a mere onlooker, as one new to the whole thing. If her first country season failed, she failed with it. To make it succeed, she had to keep hundreds of persons amused, in relays counted by the score, for weeks at a stretch. A great gathering of this kind is, no doubt, Liberty Hall, but it must still offer only a freedom of choice in enchantments. And for these the host and hostess are responsible, say what you will. Whatever happens, their guests are never to know a moment of weariness, except by their own default. Think of the responsibilities of it, as a sort of variety-show in excelsis, with lightning changes of program, and something to suit everybody's taste.

And all tastes were there: of statesman, soldier, sportsman, artist, light of literature, and mere man or woman of the world—some of them doubling their parts with the sport. They came down in sets, for three or five days, usually the former; and for each in his turn Allonby was to be a realized fairy-tale. Augusta had never dreamed of the like

of it, for the descriptions accessible to her had failed altogether in their rendering of its atmospheric effects. What she wanted to do was stand in the corner and look on, in speechless curiosity, at the best of England, and even of the rest of the world, in its best moment of social expansion. What she had to do was take her place as leader of the revels, and give the note. The task might have been beyond her powers but for precious aid. Aunt Emily was there, as duenna, for counsel in the higher proprieties; and, for the others, there were any number of the ministers of household state who held office under the duke. Happily, both ministers and their masters are permitted to qualify by a sort of impartial ignorance of the work of departments. Allonby could only be governed like an empire, it was such a big affair. For her first season, at any rate, our duchess, née Augusta Gooding, was content to do as she was told, and she was as submissive to her bureaucracy as a sultan or a czar.

The style of it, the luxury, the wealth, the very extravagance—well, no words will serve! As in London the triumph of entertaining is to make extremes meet by bringing the fruits of summer to the winter board, so here you have to overcome the natural quiet of a scene formed for introspection and repose by the importation of all the bustle of town. Out of its season, Allonby was as magnificently dull as a peak in the Andes. It was a peak itself, for that matter, but a host of the most bril-

liant figures were to dance on it in the most glittering panoply of revel, with nothing to put them out of countenance but the occasional solemnity of the sky. What a business—to get the right people, and to put them in the way of keeping each other amused! As Augusta sped or failed in this task, so might the family influence wax or wane in the remotest parts of the earth. For every parting guest took his report to the next house of call on his ceaseless round of pleasure, until it became smoking-room talk in Ultima Thule, and giant headline in the neighborhood of the Golden Gate.

It was an unusually large party this year because of the marriage. The fame of the duke's strange adventure in love had gone forth, and every one wanted to see his conqueror. The tiny station could hardly cope with the traffic, fortified as the manager was by the assistance of an emergency gang. At night, especially, it suggested the arrival of distinguished company in Hades, with its many cries indicative of souls in travail, and strange flashings of light in the gloom. For every newcomer had to be supplied with carriage accommodation according to his needs, even if these went no higher than the station fly; and many, as an additional courtesy due to sex or rank, exacted a ducal carriage, with a brake for the piles of luggage that strewed the platform. The luggage was distracting. The men's was bad enough in its litter of the gear of sport. The women's—well, it is only to be imagined in its lavish provision for three or four complete toilets

a day, and no day like the last. And with many of them came their body-servants: the English valets; the French maids watching over huge sarcophagi of basket-trunks, or grasping headless "shapes" in palls of brown holland which seemed to have been denied a portion of their funeral rites. For the moment the maids were more in evidence, as they clubbed their way through the press with jewel-cases and hardly less precious dressing-bags which they kept in their own charge. The servants, of course, had to be lodged as well as their betters; and their life in the great cavernous halls below stairs was only less wondrous in character and variety than the life above. The others seemed to claim every nook of the vast superstructure for the needs of their state in bedrooms, dressing-rooms, and even sitting-rooms for the married pairs.

The stately and elaborate routine of it begins from the moment they enter the castle gates. To-morrow most of the men go after partridges, and most of the women after the devices of their own hearts. The pheasant remains sacred and inviolate till the first of the next month. It is still being coddled for the gun in its preserves of rich bracken—watched against poachers for the early market by men who lie out all night; fed, almost as with a spoon, with huge smoking messes of Indian corn which the keepers carry to its haunts, whistling a call to dinner as they go. The shooting people are early afoot, and they breakfast by themselves. The regular meal is later, when the ladies

come down in charming morning toilets, and the ladies' men are in attendance. The meal is wholly devoid of form. The guests straggle down in any order of time that pleases them, and, as often as not, help themselves from the sideboard to the more solid fare. They eat as our ancestors ate in the German woods; and no one smirks, hands a dish, or takes any ceremonial notice of his neighbor. You are perfectly free in every respect, even to fast or feast in your own room.

Some of the ladies will presently change to tweeds to join the guns, perhaps to take a shot, if they like. The duchess draws the line here in her duties of patronage, but not for want of knowledge of the game. She can go as straight to the mark on a target as the others on a bird. The wild life of the woods has been about her from childhood, but she has never drawn trigger on a living thing. But, now and then, she joins the shooting-parties at their luncheon in field or farm-house, wherever the program of the day's sport may lead. The meal is sometimes spread in one of the little rustic lodges that dot the domain. It is Watteau without the artificiality, if also without the rather incongruous grace. The birds are the business. Every incident of this part of the day, new to Augusta's eyes, attests the pomp and circumstance of sport: the lordly keepers, rulers of the hour; the obedient "guns"; the silent line all working to signs, lest a bird should hear a whisper or a footfall where it is presently going to die to something like a roar of artillery; the rustic beaters driving the game on to

its fate, and their hang-dog air as of creatures who have all their lives been driven on to theirs in much the same way—all so manifestly a growth of law, custom, class supremacy, and class pride, maturing through centuries of time.

The other arts of life must await their turn till the tea-hour unites most of the party at the castle —perhaps in the vast hall, for the greater freedom of movement and incidentally the greater brilliancy of effect. Augusta is here again, in another change of toilet, and as a matter of duty—the only one in bonds, because it is her part to see that the others have their perfect liberty. For, if they do not like any of these things, they may sketch the ruins, bury themselves in the library, play billiards, ride, drive, or what not, or even take a nap. It is her part to see that they have no hindrance in such pursuits, especially in the subtlest and most disagreeable form of a too manifest solicitude for their comfort. In fact, she has to make everything occur according to desire for everybody, without seeming to have any hand in the matter. The dowager is invaluable here, and not the least so with her occasional "My dear, just let 'em alone." Most of them unconsciously second her efforts by their usage of the mode of life, and by their knowledge of their own minds. For the burden of ceremony in England you must attend a tea in the suburbs with muffins for four. At this reunion it is soothing, to Augusta at least, to find that women do enter a little more fully into the scheme of things. Some sports, like some faiths, do not tend to give the sex an indispensable

part in life. Manu, it is said, was produced without female assistance, and was but an emanation of the austerities of prayer. Live and let live: for one half of the world, at least, it can never be his best title to regard.

After tea it is again Liberty Hall till the first bell sounds for dinner, when you enter into community life. It is much the same with the hours that immediately follow. Nothing seems to happen by contrivance, but everything occurs at the right time—even the impromptu charades. Augusta knows. The artists from the Français who have come down from London for the duologue are admittedly a matter of pecuniary arrangement, but they are received on a footing of social equality with a *nuance* which might leave all but themselves ignorant of the fact. The thought-readers, though they seem so spontaneous, are a put-up job. The dowager suggested the man of letters who is now writing his autograph. Her life is spent in little services of this sort, and she prides herself on being able to "get" anybody in the world of notoriety that the world of fashion may at any moment wish to see. All she asks is a little backing from those in whose interest she labors. "Certainly I can get him if you want him; but you must take the trouble to read one of his writin's. It makes him look like a fool; and, if that does n't so much matter, only think of me! It is so awkward to have people starin' at him, and talkin' about the weather, as if he was a mere gun."

The duke is proud of his wife's success, and it is unquestionable. There is not the slightest difficulty with the old families. Their own claims of birth are much more modest than other persons, who have none, are disposed to make for them. And besides, the duke's pleasure would be enough, if Augusta's modesty, good sense, and self-reliance were not there to keep her armed at every point. She always has the tone, if sometimes she may lack the manner, of their august order.

For all that it is hard to avoid embarrassment when one of her own coroneted countrywomen tastefully invites her assent to the proposition that only blood tells.

The duke looks uneasy, but smiles, which is sometimes his way of showing that he is annoyed.

"Blood?" returns his wife. "There are so many varieties."

"I mean the blue," says her friend.

"Some of that," observes Augusta, sweetly, "reminds one of the advertisement of the writing-fluid."

"I never read advertisements."

"Blue in the first impression only, but mere black at last."

"I was speaking of society."

"And I," retorted Augusta, "was thinking of the seventy-odd millions of the United States."

"I regret to say that I have not so many on my visiting-list. It is my misfortune, but it might be awkward when it came to shaking hands."

"Once the Roman women were horny-handed; and the world went pretty well then."

"I dare say; and once, no doubt, the American woman made cheeses."

"I hope she makes them still: it may be useful at a pinch."

"Quite out of fashion, I assure you."

"More 's the pity. Let us keep up our faith in American ideas. I still like to think that, as soon as we 've found out how to heat the water in Boston harbor, there 'll be afternoon tea for the universe."

The duke chuckles; and what can his wife want more?

The people know each other,—that is the great point,—and they blend. They meet so often at this or other houses that they all seem to belong to one great family. Yet they are deliciously catholic in their tastes, interests, and ways of life. They have a selectness of habit, training, and privilege rather than of race, and they very much answer to the description of that most ancient of aristocracies who had great domains, spoke a separate language, and were held incapable of crime. The particularism in the mode of speech may go no further than slang; but there it is as a sign of independence. They are a law unto themselves. Apart from those of their order who merely make a dash at it, and then run back to work, they form a class who live to purely recreative ends, and they are apt to die with something like a feeling of resentment at the carelessness of Providence.

Their life has been magnificently organized for active indolence by the labor of ages. They are after the partridge now; presently they will be after the stag or the fox-cub, the salmon, or anything else to their mind in water, earth, or air. It is house-party after house-party, with London in between for a sort of snap shot of a winter season, or southern Europe or the Nile, and the strenuous toil of pleasure all the way. They believe that most people —that is to say, the mass of mankind not in their set—are but half alive, and feel as sorry for them as we all do for the babies born in that condition in the slums. To keep up the sense of vitality, they shrink from no experience that offers the promise of a sensation.

One of the countesses keeps a bonnet-shop in Bond street—by deputy, of course, but still without any attempt to conceal the matter from her own set. Another dabbles in socialism; not that she believes in it, for she believes in nothing in particular; but it is at least an experience and—a pose. And then she is so absolutely ignorant of the a-b-c of her heresy that even the National Democratic Federation might be moved to tears. It is only baby, and the gun is not charged. A little raconteur of standing, of that tattling sex which physiologists now say is the male, tells stories of his order that even socialists might like to hear. The rule of the professional secret makes it all safe. An informal dance may belong to the amusements of this hour, but as a rule the men are too dead beat after their day's

work with the gun for anything of that sort. They revive for the smoking-room when the ladies have left for the night, and there they swap the lies of anecdote until the small hours of the morning. When it is not scandal it is the rigor of the game in sport: pointer or retriever, the old style against the new; aiming with only one eye open, or with both, one school maintaining that nature has shown her wonted prodigality in the supply of this organ; schools of shooting; have your guns cut to measure, though you buy your coats ready-made; soft shot, chilled shot, hard shot; how best to lay out a wood for a day's sport; poachers, polecats, pin-fires; and so on until the head fairly spins with it, if one is not to the manner born.

On Sunday the birds have a day off, and time to count their missing friends. Their enemies go to church, stroll through the stables, the kennels, and even the picture-galleries, if they can find time for the last without any breach of the divine ordinance of repose for the day.

All this to make a poor young duchess feel that the world is a bigger and a stranger place than is dreamed of in the philosophy of the geography class, bigger even than the all outdoors of her wildest conceptions. Her brain throbs with the sense of it. What a wonderful scene! And what wonderful things she is going to do in it, and for it, as lady of Allonby! They marveled as much at her. She had made no mistakes worth mentioning, though her talk beat a book.

XII



HE duchess is driving over to luncheon at Liddicot, one of the moated halls that still survive in this amazing land.

Sir Henry Liddicot at home is the British squire in his most rare and precious and exquisite survival. For a full thousand years the family has been there, not precisely at Liddicot Manor, of course, but there in ownership, and in the county in settlement—one race winning, holding, and sitting tight. The Conquest was an innovation to them. They read of Norman William, as one might say, in their morning papers, wondering what was up now, and feeling full sure it would not be very much. The rumor of his ship-building was brought to them by runners from the south, and they set out with their quota to join the Saxon king in obedience to royal messages from the north. They were a most respectable family in Alfred's time, and they had shaken their heads over the extension of the empire when a later king took Manchester. Dim rumors of the Mohammedan invasion of India were brought by pious pilgrims to the ale-bench of their hall fire.

Their halls, of course, have changed since then. They have been rebuilt half a dozen times in every

style of domestic architecture, each of them—Saxon blockhouse, Norman keep, Elizabethan manor, with Jacobean or Palladian notions to follow, in turn the smartest thing of its kind.

Here or hereabout have been the Liddicots, taking their share of every good thing going in all that time. Think of it only. It may be simple enough to win the luck, but to keep the luck in the family for a thousand years! It is rare even in this land, with an average peerage which is but a mushroom growth. Families rise and fall as the sap of mastery within them has a nimble or a sluggish flow. So little will do it—a touch, they say. The founder toils; the founder's son takes it easy; the son's son makes a fool of himself, and then, with the Jews as brokers, the many come into their own again.

The Liddicots did it, in the first instance, by their judicious mixture of the attributes of tiger and fox. When they were not snatching, they laid a finger to the nose—not defiantly, as in one of the many varieties of that expressive gesture, but as in mature reflection on the next step. They made their submission to the first William at the right time and in the right way, and he gave them grace. They sided with the greatest of the Edwards in his struggle for domestic mastery, when all the other wiseacres of their part of the country were putting their money on the other horse. They made an equally wise choice with the last Henry, who gave them a monastery or two for their pains, and with Dutch William. After that, though not all at once,

the premonitions of the long sleep that overtakes all of us at length came over them. They drew slowly toward the conclusion that there is nothing more to do but keep a sort of perpetual balance with things as they are. The problem of perpetual rest is as trying as that of perpetual motion, and it has engaged the attention of whole generations of the most respectable families time out of mind.

So they invented a sort of philosophy of fatigue which, in their present representative, has reached its finest flower. The good old baronet has an honest impatience of every kind of thoroughness of thought and action which makes him the perfect Englishman of his time. His whole line in life is determined by a rooted suspicion of first principles. He lives by a glorified rule of thumb, and moves from event to event with the pious ejaculation of "Sufficient unto the day—" He is incurably suspicious of all attempts to get to the bottom of things in "politics, literature, science, and art." "Lord, how the world is given to fads!" is his cry of protest. He shivers at the thought of new departures, unless they are reasonably old, and he is sure that when they started they went beyond what was necessary. He accepts them as soon as they are there, just because they are there, for he is the very genius of submission to the accomplished fact. But if he had been asked his sanction in advance, they would have had long to wait. He is for moderation in all things; even moderation "must n't go too far, you know"—the man of the unjust *milieu*, in a word.

He has elaborated his theory of life as a mere rubbing along in the old house on the old estate, both slowly wearing to decay without discomfort and without shock. All he wants is to live by the land, as his fathers did before him, making it pay for all their mistakes. His farmers farm stupidly, his laborers fly to the towns, he has a spendthrift son in the army—like his sire, one of the best fellows in the world. Yet it never strikes him for one moment that his wasteful housekeeping, his mortgages, his entails, his huge system of patriarchal dependence, is anything less than in the nature of things. He is everything such a man may be expected to be: not a Tory, only a Conservative, in favor of "reasonable reforms," such, for instance, as the one affecting the precedence of baronets; not a Protectionist,—the name brings a shock to his mind,—but only a person desiring a moderate duty for the encouragement of agriculture. He is a moderate churchman—certainly not High, undoubtedly not Low, one capable of tempering the rigor of the demand for the eastward position by the offer of an east-by-north. He compounds for the confessional by now and then asking his vicar to dinner, and casually putting points of conduct to him over the wine. There is nothing wrong with him in the world but his horoscope: he is Sir Roger de Coverley born just two centuries too late.

To have everything in keeping, his home is his castle in the most exact sense of the term. Where else could he live but in one of the beautiful old

moated halls still to be found in England, with living water in the moat? He still raises his drawbridge every night and lowers it every morning, just because his fathers had done the like for centuries, and he really is not equal to the effort of beginning to leave off. His habits are not to be affected by anything so transient as the new dispensation of a county constabulary. What joy in the thought of this continuing city amid the eternal flux of things! You may enter without difficulty by a stone bridge on the other side,—the tradespeople do so enter every day,—but that does not count.

XIII



HE house comes in view at last, peeping forth from its belt of trees as the duchess approaches it on this summer day. The trees were part of the old scheme of fortification. You might pass them without suspecting that they screened an abode of men. The garrison lay in hiding, or pounced forth in sudden aggression, according to circumstances. Now that concealment is no longer necessary, they show a gable at need, or even a whole façade, through the gaps. On one side you catch sight of a whole range of domestic Tudor rising sheer from the moat, where parts of it, resting on columns of solid stonework, stand like a man in water up to the knees. In another façade the owners before building have manifestly been at peace with the world. The struggle of the more elemental kind is over. No one is going to disturb the Liddicots. The architect therefore plans for lawns sloping to the water's edge, treats himself to the stone bridge aforesaid, and cuts down the trees to give a fair view of his handiwork.

The drawbridge is lowered now, "for fun," as Mary promised, and that young person is seen waving joyous welcome from the castellated porch

beyond. Augusta answers the signal with her handkerchief, and, at the same time, becomes aware of the master of the house. He is fishing in the moat from his study window, and he decamps in some confusion to take his place at his own door, where he is seen in an entirely suitable framework. He is of middle height, sturdy, square to the four winds —still like his dwelling. He looks engagingly dense, obstinate, unideal—and golden-hearted where he likes, but only there. The manner is blunt—one can hardly say to a fault. He has a singular brevity of conversational style, due to a desire to "get it over" with the smallest possible delay. His broad face is now all melted out of its ordinary lines of character by his unaffected joy at the sight of his guest. He bows his bare head low over her hand in courtly style, leads her to the foot of the great oak staircase, and then, surrendering her to his daughter, turns aside into the dining-room to await her return.

"Mary, what a place!" murmurs Augusta, as they come down-stairs.

"Wait till you have seen it," laughs the girl. "Dad, you had better let me be guide: you are too slow. I 'll show you over at the same time, if you behave yourself."

"All right, my dear. I shall be here when you want me. Don't trust to her dates, duchess: whenever she gets beyond the Restoration, I have to dig her out."

A great peace steals over Augusta's mind as she

strolls through the black oak galleries, the low bedrooms, the lofty reception-rooms of these strata of the past, with their furniture, folios, armor, gear of hall, and gear of bower all in perfect keeping.

"We have everything a genuine old place should have, I think," says Mary, simply, "including the entire absence of a bed slept in by Queen Elizabeth. Those beds are only for the new-fashioned show-houses, and Wardour street can hardly keep pace with the demand. If you want something real in that line, we can show you a bed stuffed with rabbit's fur, the down of its day. Don't look so serious, father dear."

"Don't be foolish, Mary."

"Well, never mind about the bed; but please, Mary, I want a ghost—only a little one."

"Nothing of that sort here," said the squire.

"Father!"

"Oh, you mean the noises. All fancy, that! They hung the wrong man,—pure inadvertence,—and they thought he walked. They fidgeted—that was all. Besides, it was hundreds of years ago, and what 's that to do with us?"

"Yes; but they hung him up-stairs, dad."

"Up-stairs?" shuddered Augusta.

"Old times, you know, duchess. We had to do everything on the premises then, even the judging and—the rest. Modern improvements since—circuits, jails, and what not. Every man's house was his workshop, too. We 've a suit of Saxon armor, all steel, and all made in the place."

"All very well for the armor, Sir Henry, I dare say. But for the hanging—who gave them the right?"

"Manorial courts, you know—every lord of a manor his own judge, jury, executioner. I assure you, there was no other way. Great improvements now, and all for the best, I 've no doubt."

"The duchess wants to see the room, father."

"Mary!" "Mary!"—from both host and guest. Yet, somehow, one led the way, and the other followed. There was really nothing to see but a long, bare attic immediately under the roof, with huge whitewashed cross-beams, which looked little more than a streak in the artificial gloom. The squire seemed to feel that some apology was expected.

"You see, it was very hard to keep the field-laborers from passing out of their class and place of settlement and going to the towns to pick up a trade. It is a difficulty even now, I assure you. Our people were hard sometimes—I can't deny that. We have funny entries in the old register down-stairs—burning on the forehead, and what not. Shocking! I hate all that excess. But I suppose this really was a bad case. It 's the only one on the family, so far as I know. My grandfather's grandfather used merely to put 'm in the stocks, and he would be called unreasonable now. We must march with the times."

"Oh, we have been a disreputable gang in our day!" laughs Mary. "We can show you a turret-chamber in the other wing where one of our re-

moter grandmamas had to pass her honeymoon behind bars and bolts, after she had been stolen from her father's house."

"They went too far; I 've told you, they went too far," says the squire, testily, as he turns from the room. "What can you say more? But we might still learn a thing or two, even from them. I 'm going to offer you a carp at luncheon, duchess, caught in the moat this morning, and own brother in point of dressing and flavor to one that was stewed in wine for King Henry VII when he passed this way four hundred years ago."

"You must give me the receipt for Allonby, Sir Henry."

"Mary will turn it into plain English for you. It is in our old buttery-book—one of the best bits of reading in the library. You have to know how to read it, though. It is all in monkish script, and it looks as spider-webbed as a writ of Edward III."

"And all illuminated, if you please," adds Mary, "with an initial letter showing one early Liddicot at dinner helping himself with thumb and finger, and another wiping his mouth with his sleeve and looking as though he had done no evil. Oh, we really were a disreputable set once upon a time! Please don't ask questions about the plate, duchess. Some of it was no better than what the dreadful housebreaking people nowadays call 'swag'—bagged from the looted châteaux by a Liddicot who served under the Regent Bedford in the French wars."

"Mary, don't tease," says her father.

After luncheon they generously leave him to his nap, on pretense of a stroll through the rooms. There is the usual mixture of good and bad in the picture-gallery, most of it old indeed, but not all genuine. Some of the Titians were never seen by that master. Yet they were entirely adequate for wonder and delight to earlier Liddicots who had acquired them on the grand tour. Mingled with these are the family portraits—dames and damsels of many epochs (some, in which the family expression reappears after temporary eclipse, looking like Mary dressed for a masquerade), judges and soldiers, with here and there the kings they served. Both the ladies stop before the effigy of a cavalryman of our time, still glistening with the glories of varnishing-day at the Academy, fair, yet well tanned by field-sports, well groomed, square-chinned, round-headed, close-cropped, and with a look of satisfaction in the joy of being, characteristic of those spoiled children of Fortune whom she has never put to the trouble of saying "No."

"That 's my brother Tom," says the girl, fondly, in answer to the other's glance of inquiry, "and he 's coming down next week."

"What a lovely man—I mean what a fine, handsome fellow. Is n't he just perfect!"

"Oh, he 's not so bad, though I say it, and the most good-natured thing in the world. But he 's just a little costly for poor father. Not that he can help that: it 's a crack regiment, you know."

"I suppose he 's hard at work at his mili-

tary studies, with all this trouble ahead at the Cape."

"I don't think so. You see, he had to pass, and all that sort of thing, before he got in, and they don't trouble them much after that. And, besides, he knows where he is on a horse, and he 's quite a beautiful shot; so there does n't seem much more to learn."

"One sometimes fancies there might be," says the duchess, gravely. "But I dare say he has quite enough to do."

"Never a moment to spare, I assure you, and four house-parties ahead. It was a terrible London season; in fact, he 's coming down to rest."

"Please bring him to Allonby, dear, before the week is out. I hope I shall have a brother to show you soon. I 've written for Arthur, who has just left college. The baby, I call him, because he 's three years younger than I am; but he 'd pass for a man, all the same."

"That will be nice."

The girl is for hurrying on; but the duchess insists on stopping to look at another portrait that hangs by the side of Tom's. It is Mary herself. She is very handsome, tall and finely built. She has dignity—a courteous and gentle dignity, not by any means the terrifying "hauteur" of the melodramatic heroine, though the head is held very high and the whole posture is strong and quietly self-possessed. The dress, so far as one can see it beneath the big cloak, seems to be a sort of lace tea-gown,

freely flowing. The face is a full oval (not a peaky egg-shape), the nose straight and somewhat Grecian. Large brown eyes, frank and kind, and beautifully curved, full lips, give the face an expression of truth and sweetness. Over the brow, which is broad and high, the hair descends in little films and curls, and is piled up on the head in light masses. Resting on these clouds of brown, a large black hat with plumes sweeps upward in a bold slant. It reminds one of the head-gear of some Velasquez portrait—a Spanish general or monarch; and the folds of the dark mantle, lightened as it is by creamy satin and lace, voluminously falling from the shoulders and down the front, add to the rich and flowing effect. It is pleasantly free from the frightened, unimaginative stiffness of ordinary modern costume. Yet Mary is no Velasquez lady with mysterious eyes that look at one straight and brimful of meaning, yet will not reveal one of their myriad secrets. In spite of her great mantle and sweeping hat, Velasquez would either have refused to paint her, or he would have given her different eyes and a different expression. Her attraction thus transformed might, to some tastes, be more powerful, but she would have lost her simple English quality, and the grand, free, modern look that belongs peculiarly to our day—if portraits truly represent the women of the past.

At their leave-taking Mary gives her guest a bunch of rare and precious ferns that might have suggested a whole course of lectures to a professor of botany —maidenhair, spleenwort, three-leaved saxifrage,

hart's-tongue, ivy-leaved snapdragon, even umbellated chickweed, picked from the crannies of wall and roof, or from the crumbling brickwork of the moat.

The duchess wonders as she drives away whether men or mosses have anything more to fear when once they have turned the corner of a thousand years.

XIV

SHE found the duke out of sorts on her return.

"He won't sell—and be hanged to him!" he said, handing her a letter from his solicitors. One of the inclosures was a note from his neighbor, Mr. Kisbye of "The Grange," refusing to part with a piece of land on any terms.

Years ago, in a fatal moment when the duke's agent happened to be looking the other way, Mr. Kisbye snapped up a field or two that impaired the rounded integrity of the ducal domain.

This purchase cut right into the estate, and spoiled the amenity of it. The intruder got it by an extravagant bid to a needy owner, at a time when his Grace's solicitors were opening their parallels in the usual impious way that assumes the eternal duration of the world. He wanted a country settlement, and here it was within a stone's cast of one of the greatest estates in England. So he sneaked it by purchase—much as the duke's forefathers might have sneaked it in another way. His Grace offered to pay handsomely for his mistake through the solicitors, but Mr. Kisbye smiled derisively at every bid, and stuck as close as a horse-fly with a lodgment.

"A Naboth's vineyard at Allonby," Augusta said. "Who would have thought it?"

"It is not exactly that, but it establishes this bounder from town, this nondescript without any means of getting a living that can be known and traced, as a country gentleman and farmer, even a landlord in his small way."

"I understand a little. I 'm going to get quite as much annoyed as you are when I understand more."

"It 's his set," he said, laughing. "Did n't you hear them holding their witches' sabbath in the middle of the night?"

"I thought it was rooks, and took it for poetry."

"Quite enough to wake them, with the glare and the noise."

"We 're not obliged to speak to him."

"Speak! It 's the rubbing shoulders I can't stand."

"Kisbye does not seem very anxious to rub."

" No., the worst of it is, they 're beginning to be sufficient to themselves. They join hands across counties; and the motor-car brays their progress from house to house of their set for costly guzzle, and all their other comforts of home."

"I have n't exactly got to that yet," she said, "but I feel that I 'm coming to it."

"To what?"

"That horror of merely living in the same hemisphere with undesirables. Why not look the other way?"

"There are so many other ways. They 're everywhere. They snap up all the old places in the market, and furnish in a night and a day, and, not only in upholstery and dinner-services, but in people to sit at the board. I assure you this fellow actually bids for younger sons and needy elders who don 't always find it easy to get to Allonby; aye, and gets 'em, too."

"Don't you know why? Because, from all I 've heard,—through the open windows, if you like,—there is a go in their mirth which is sometimes wanting in the statelier establishments. Their stars of the variety stage are livelier than those of Bayreuth, and they import an up-to-date wickedness of the asphalt which puts the historic and legendary sort in the shade. They can get art and literature of a kind, even poets of the minor constellation, and thinkers—for metaphysics and the love of a good dinner are still as closely allied as ever."

"Yes, yes," he said, with a sigh. "If they don't always know what to do with their chances, they 'll learn in time. There are West End tailors to rig them in the costume of sport, though on some of them it sits about as gracefully as the court-dress at wax-work shows; gamekeepers to teach them to point a gun, and even to carry it; crack billiard-players for their object-lessons in the mathematics of amusement; and, for the golf, the costliest importations from St. Andrews, who are canny enough to reserve the bad language of uncontrollable disgust for the safe side of the bunker. Their motto is that

everything may be picked up. They don't mind consulting the groom of the chambers as to the amount of the tip, and offering to toss him for the difference between his estimate and their bid. The thing hums. They buy the old halls, sometimes only as sites and names, and put up new ones of marble and plate-glass in their places, with the armor still on the premises, and the turret-chamber in communication by telephone with the Stock Exchange. They mean business,—that is the humor of it,—and they are going to fight it out on this line till the judgment day."

"People of that sort always make me laugh," said Augusta.

"They make me sad."

"I 'm sure that 's more dignified."

"Come now, Augusta. Do you remember that specimen we saw at Rome—the one I had to complain of to the landlord of the hotel?"

"Shall I ever forget him?"

"Well, he 's one of Kisbye's barons. I met him yesterday, as large as life; and he had the impudence to bow. Somebody gave me his history—circus rider to start with, declined into billiard-marking, married a pawnbroker's widow, ennobled her at her own expense by investing part of the dowry in a title. He gets himself interviewed in the papers as a rollicking blade who has outridden and outdrunk the Magyars, and generally had a deuce of a life. It 's killing, I 'm told, to catch him in one of his familiar haunts in town. After a hard day's work

in pursuit of the widow of the moment, he sinks into a seat with an order for a pint of beer. That 's one of the set at 'The Grange'; I hope you 're annoyed with Kisbye now."

"No; I 'm still laughing."

"Well, then, listen to this. I hear that he has had the impudence to beg, borrow, or steal a photograph of Mary Liddicot, and to hang it in his drawing-room without ever having exchanged a word with her in his life."

"Now you may put him to death," said Augusta.

XV

 HE peddler rang his bell as he neared the village, and the women came to their doors. It was an audience as well as a knot of customers. He had things to sell which they could get nowhere else without a long journey; and he brought the local news and that strange atmosphere of the outer world which attends the very tramp on his rounds. In his uses as a chapman he had well-nigh everything in their simple range of wants—crockery, tinware, scraps of furniture, plain stuffs and the wherewithal for their make-up, writing-paper of the commonest, some of it destined to carry fateful words from village homes to the uttermost ends of the earth, pipes and pouches for the men, fancies in bead-work or cheap jewelry for the women, toys for the children, oil for the murderous little village lamps.

All this was arranged on his cart in most orderly confusion; he could have found his way to a needle or slate-pencil with his eyes shut, and you could have robbed him of hardly a packet of pins without immediate detection. But no one wanted to rob him. All seemed to like him, and to have friendly relations with even the horse in the shafts. He was a

good-looking young fellow; and his manners, a mixture of cautious familiarity and genial sarcasm, were part of his stock in trade. He sold the article, and threw in the epigram by way of bonus.

His face was turned toward Slocum Parva, yet he was miles away from that restful spot, in a scene, if possible, more restful still. England has almost the secret of these placid hamlets which seem a hundred miles from everywhere. His bell, for all the lenity of its motion, seemed to smite the stillness with a note of alarm.

He was soon surrounded, mainly by those who coveted his gauds. There is always something to sharpen the appetite of want in a general store. No human being might seem to need a cow in glazed earthenware, with a view of Brighton inserted as a medallion in the center of its system; yet he had found a buyer for such an article by urging a young woman on the eve of marriage to consider the tragedy of a home without pretty things. It is a peculiarity of purchases of this kind that they awaken unavailing remorse immediately on the completion of the bargain. The young woman hid her offense with her apron as she moved away. He did a brisk trade, with varying fortunes, for the customers often cut him close. His final encounter was with a matron who had to complain of the behavior of a clock bought of him last week. This sex is distinguished by its twin passions for adulation and for the sallies of a sprightly audacity which might seem to preclude it. The peddler had both oil and vinegar in

his manner, but the acid was only a subflavor, and, like a good salad, he was preëminently bland.

"Won't go, ma'am! Nonsense! Let 's have a look at it." He stretched out his hand for the delinquent, and subjected it to a keenly scrutinizing gaze. It was a most melancholy little object in painted wood, but one degree above the timepiece of a Noah's ark. "Ah, I thought so: it 's in a temper, that 's what 's the matter with it. You bought it too cheap, ma'am, you really did. Clocks have their feelin's, like Christians: an article o' this sort does n't like to be knocked down at two and elevenpence ha'penny. But you 've got such a way with you! I wonder you did n't get it for nothin': you might, if you 'd stood out."

"None of your gammon!"

"P'r'aps the young uns have been playing with it? Not as I bear no malice; I could forgive 'em anything—children like that."

"It 's been on the top shelf all the toime, out of their reach."

"That 's it; it felt lonesome. There, it 'll be all right now."

"It 's afeard o' you, I reckon; it 'll go wrong soon 's you 've turned your back."

"Money returned if not found suited; but give it another trial. Do you know what I fancied at fust?" he added as a parting shot. "I thought somebody might ha' been nagging their 'usbands. I 've known a woman's tongue stop a clock. Thank you!"

The last words were evidently a signal to the ani-

mal in the shafts, and the equivalent of the "Gee up!" of the ordinary commerce of horse-flesh. They were uttered with a peculiar intonation, and at the sound of them the faithful creature moved forward with a jerk that gave a rattle to the whole stock in trade. It was a sign of the completed transaction in flummery, and it carried horse and man beyond the reach of reprisal. None was to be feared in this instance. The woman laughed a good-natured threat of vengeance, and went indoors with the clock in her arms. The peddler, before leaving the parish bounds, waylaid a little girl, and, with the gift of a peppermint, induced her to take charge of a bundle of handbills for house-to-house distribution. They contained an announcement of the forthcoming elections for the parish councils, and an earnest appeal to the Progressive party at large to return candidates of the right sort. He dropped other bills of the same kind on the bare hedge-rows, where, as they occasionally fluttered to the ground, they looked like some new and belated variety of fungoid growths.

The man was George Herion, of course. Much had happened since he was last seen. For one thing, he had got married; for another, he had started the little general shop on wheels wherewith he threatened defiance to adverse fate on a memorable occasion. With the success of it Rose had been dazzled into the great venture, and Slocum Parva had almost shaken off its terror of heroic ideals. Our merchant adventurer began cautiously by buying a small stock in trade, piling it on a hand-truck, and wheeling it

two-and-twenty miles out and home every day, "standing market" for a rest on the outward journey. Nothing could resist such determination. What the villages on one line of route refused had a second chance in the little market town, and a third in the other villages on the home stretch. When George had ten golden sovereigns knotted in his handkerchief, he told Rose that the time had come to name the day. She named it without further hesitation. The village knew it that night; the duchess knew it next morning; and by the favor of that august person they were established, within a fortnight, in their own cottage, after one of the prettiest village weddings Slocum had ever seen.

But for Augusta they would have been homeless. Slocum maintained so exquisite an adjustment of means to end in house-room that it had no place for the new pair. George had lived with his mother, Rose with hers: there were no cottages to let. To build was out of the question: the area of human shelter was fixed as by some law of nature. The village was almost hermetically closed to newcomers. Even babies were considered to have taken an unfair advantage, and were discouraged for the very reason that they might one day grow up with claims of independent settlement like those of Rose and George. As individuals these young persons might plead a right of prescription; as a pair they were intruders. The mothers tried to settle the matter with a happy thought: by living together they might set one cottage free. But the duke's agent was not

disposed to sanction this arrangement until the duchess signified that it had her entire approval. So Rose now lived as wife in the cottage in which she had lived as nursling, and, indeed, had first seen the light.

The marriage gave George more to work for, and so, naturally, he worked more. He went on till he saved enough to put shafts to the hand-cart, and a horse to the shafts. In a little time people began to turn their faces toward Slocum when they wanted a flat-iron or a rolling-pin, and Randsford saw its proud supremacy assailed. Rose now needed little to make her the happiest young woman in all the wide world, not even the contrast of a latent anxiety. George still kept up the interest in village politics which owed its birth to the passage of the van, and which had cost him the favor of the "gentlefolks" in the person of Mr. Kisbye. But the ideal of well-being at Slocum Parva was a life without opinions as the prime condition of a life without events. Rose trembled for her mate, now with vague apprehension, and then again with joy at the thought of his power of making things come right.

And so, singing by the way, the peddler went from hamlet to hamlet in his wide round, through villages of all varieties—villages sleepier and sillier than Slocum itself; petted villages, coddled as carefully as Mr. Raif's; wicked villages, where you might get drunk at unlawful hours by whistling in the right note at the right back door; fighting villages, where they lived on dim though still stimulating memories

of a time when it was "Who are yer, stranger? Can ye foight?" and off went their coats till the wayfarer established his right of sojourn by the ordeal of battle. He was greeted, as he passed, by the country sights, the country sounds, the plow, the drill, the humming steam-thresher, the opening notes of chaffinch or blackbird, the opening flower of crocus or primrose, here and there perhaps by some almost white-haired school-boy with a red neck, hereafter, as soldier or sailor, to keep the flag in the sunlight on its passage round the world. Ah, the glorious life of the road! Amid such scenes who could not wish forever to defer the visit of the "terminator of delights and the separator of companions"?

At a turn of his course he drew up to make room for a carriage and pair cleaving their way through a light cloud of Olympic dust of their own raising. He had just time to recognize the liveries, and bring himself to the salute, when, with a smile and a cheerful "Good day, Herion," the duchess was whirled out of sight. The family was still in residence, but was preparing for the annual migration to town. The house-parties were over; the whole world of the British worldlet was going up for the annual meeting of Parliament, and for the ordeal by fire of the London season.

Augusta's interest in George, at first a mere consequence of her interest in Rose, had grown with better acquaintance. She had learned to like him for himself, and for the variety which his pluck and resource had introduced into the pattern of village

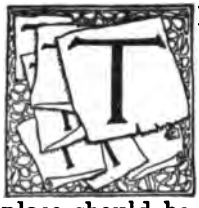
life. He was refreshing, after the rather too monotonous note of submission; and the sight of him somehow seemed to remind her of her native land. But she was trying to learn to take her patterns as she found them, and this not all in resignation, but simply as a philosopher in petticoats, which is as much as to say a woman of the world. Here was her new home and place of settlement, and here, with it, must be her new point of view. It was as fascinating as China to the thoughtful mind. So millions live and have lived in their own way, and apparently to the greatest ends, in a majestic order with dependence for its main principle. What a contrast, not unrefreshing at times, to those tumultuous millions on "the other side," where every man's morning thought is how he may get one step ahead of his neighbor!

Augusta remembered Uncle Gooding's fable of how they brought the great railway out West. According to this, they put a line of workmen one behind the other, with the smartest last, to give the time. "The one ahead had to keep pace with the one behind, you bet, or he felt the point of the pick in his heel as he was plugging along. By gum, sir, that last one hotfooted up the whole circus, and they got it fed into them that they had to hustle for all they were worth!"

The peddler was at home now, and the wife received him with a kiss in a kitchen which ought to be considered the "best room" of the house, since it was at least without pretense of style. But his ad-

miration, like hers, was reserved for the lurid glories of another chamber into which at last they peeped fondly on their way up-stairs. There it was in its sanctities of plush-framed photographs—George in his Sunday wear, colored like life, Rose in her wedding hat; in its antimacassars, saddle-bag suites, tormented carpets, their patterns echoing the cries of pain from the walls. Ah, how grateful they felt, how good, at the thought of all this redeeming gaiety and beauty in their rather sordid lives! The peep into the best room especially was almost devotional in its effects. George registered a silent vow to be more deserving of his new-found luck. Rose mingled the thought of it with her prayers.

XVI



HE family had left for town. The great house was shut up. But Slocum was saved from the void of human interests by the election of its first parish council. The problem of such an election in such a place should be dear to science as to history, since it touches on the question of the indivisibility of matter in the legislative domain. You cannot get much farther down in institutions seen under the microscope. The relation of all parliamentary boards and other assemblies of the British governmental scheme to this speck on the planet is that of Ossa to the wart. Slocum's council is the village senate, the village administration, the village forum, the village tribune in one. It is still a new thing. Parliament, finding the peasantry clamorous for the right to manage their own affairs, has tossed them this log. So it is Gurth the swineherd at the council, with Wamba the witless, if he can find a place, and, with them, Cedric the Saxon, and even Brian de Bois-Guilbert, retired, if any can manage to commend himself to the favor of the tiny electorate.

There is something quite captivating in the thought of the exquisite littleness of the whole thing. The observer seems to watch the processes of insect

life. Here is the smallest unit, the very protoplasm of corporate existence, and it has, as such, the charm of all absolutes. You can hardly get nearer to the vanishing-point of institutions than the village council. It has been known to have an audit of nineteen shillings and eightpence ha'penny for the entire year. One may conceive a worn chancellor of the exchequer turning to its debates for refreshment of spirit after a budget night. The question of the abolition of the village pump, in favor of a supply from the mains, means as much to Slocum as the abolition of slavery or the repeal of the corn-laws once meant to the world at large.

It should have been a walk-over for the Conservative party; but new yearnings, new hopes had come with the yellow van. It is idle to make a secret of it: Slocum Parva was undermined with subversive literature about village rights. The batteries were charged at George's; so much was known. Peascod had several times brought to the station dangerous handbills left in the hedge-rows. Bad characters were growing bold. Bangs, the poacher, had openly defied the collector of Easter offerings for the church.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of this incident as it stood entered in the constable's official report.

As the collector entered the reprobate's cottage on his peaceful, not to say his holy, mission, Bangs called out ominously to his son in the back room, "Boy, put the poker on the fire."

The collector began to collect.

"Is it hot, boy?"

"Yes, father."

"Well,"—to the collector,—"I 've heard of meat-offerings and of drink-offerings; I 'll give you a burnt-offering if you don't get out."

The collector left in haste. We live in strange times.

Then England was still under the shock of the tremendous news from South Africa, and Slocum Parva was a part of England, if only a speck of its dust. A few weeks after the departure of the ducal family came the declaration of war, with all that followed, "recoil and rally, charge and rout, and triumph and despair." Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso in one black week; Spion Kop; and then again hope, with Paardeberg and Bloemfontein. The most startling event of all for the village had been the hasty departure of Captain Liddicot for the front, with his regiment, on the very eve of the Christmas festivities, with Mary turning recluse and knitting comforters, and her father's sentient life reduced to one protracted exclamation of "Bless my soul!" In an atmosphere so charged with electricity even Slocum could not preserve its wonted calm.

There were five members to be chosen,—that was the minimum allowed by law,—and there were six candidates. The Conservatives had put up for all the seats. Their phalanx, which they believed irresistible, consisted of Kisbye, Grimber, and the schoolmaster, Parson Raif, the nominee of the castle, and

one Fawke, a person in the grocery and lollypop line, who ran in the same general interest, but with some stress on a harmless question of his own affecting the management of the annual flower show. But George had determined to set up one candidate for the Radicals, and had succeeded in persuading Spurr to quit his retirement for public life. This aged person, though, as we have seen, no orator, was a representative of the doomed class of small farmers whose all but fruitless struggle to keep themselves out of the workhouse might be expected to touch the sympathies of the electorate. The constituency could not possibly carry more. George canvassed for him, spoke for him, in spite of the sickening forebodings of Rose, who sought confirmation of her worst fears in the prophecies of the penny almanac. She found no specific warning against the danger of "tampering with parish councils," her constant theme; but this, of course, was only an oversight on the part of the reader of the stars.

Nothing could prevent George from working heart and soul for his man. As one born and bred in the village, he knew what he knew. For behind these fair outsides of Slocum, with their honeysuckle porches, there were sometimes dire realities. In the dry weather our peddler, after his hard day's work, had often to walk a mile to get a couple of pails of drinking-water for his wife's use. It was lucky for the duchess that she did not push her researches in Samson's cottage as far as the back premises. She would have found the narrow yard one pool of slush,

and, in spite of the occasional brickbats used as stepping-stones, would have risked damage to her dainty shoes. The rain and the damp at times claimed free right of entry in these ramshackle bowers of bliss. The workmen from London who came down for the wedding decorations would hardly look at them as dwelling-places.

The overcrowding was sometimes terrible, in spite of the refusal to build—or because of it. Slocum knew how many members of growing families were occasionally crowded into one room. What our village Hampden wanted was to get these things set right; with his instinct of self-help,—the instinct that had enabled him to recover himself after the mishap at Mr. Kisbye's,—he thought that only the village in council could manage it. His soul sickened against all the meddlesome guidance from above that was but coddling at the best—the very charity blankets lent in winter and sealed up during the summer, the seal to be broken only by the housekeeper at the Towers.

The combat was now joined. Skett, the navvy, was pressed into the service, and was engaged, very much in the manner of a famous character of drama, to represent a wall whereon the Progressives might exhibit a placard which was strung round his neck as he sat at the cottage door. Sally Artifex promised a public canvass of the entire womanhood of the village, not so much in the interest of any political party as with a view to the selection of candidates pledged to the practice of all the domestic virtues,

especially on the part of the male sex. The Conservative interest stood proudly aloof from these anxieties, relying on the all-sufficiency of its nod at the right moment. Only Mr. Kisbye rode more frequently through the village, and slightly deepened his scowl, while, to nice observers, Herbert Peascod, on his beat, seemed to keep the Knuckle of Veal in detective observation as the headquarters of the enemies of the country. The powers that be were all indifferent or worse, knowing that the new council was only one more institution to capture. There was one exception: the High-church recluse, Mr. Bascomb, made an unwonted irruption into the political arena as a supporter of the popular ticket.

For the rest, even smug Mr. Grimber from London boldly proclaimed that he was for the castle, and did not care who knew it. What was good enough for the Duke of Allonby was good enough for him. The powers of darkness, as represented by the larger areas of local government, looked down on Slocum Parva with undisguised contempt. The scorn of Allonby Towers had a spice of mirth in it, and so was tempered by good nature. The Duke of Allonby's amazement at the thought of this village was sublime in its intensity, if not exactly in its mode of expression. His village, in all its goings out and its comings in, it was, and ever should be; and the thought of its having a will of its own tickled him to that degree! The words were his, and so was the trick of leaving the rest of the sentence to the imagination of his hearers.

The populace would soon be ready for anything. This very night an orator standing on a chair outside the Knuckle of Veal publicly clamored for a new letter-box for the benefit of the straggling continuation of the village a quarter of a mile beyond its center. He was succeeded by a carter, who said there never would be quiet in the country-side till Sokes Lane, that well-known short cut between two main roads, had a new coating of metal, and a full cart-load in the hole at the bend. Then, as to the charities, a new recruit, and a woman this time, for the sex had mysteriously left the fence, asked if it were "trew" that the old writings provided for fuel without respect of persons, while under the new practice it was "no churchman, no coals."

But the water was the burning question, strange as that may seem. It threw out a heat, in the course of discussion, that led to the removal of the meeting to the inn parlor, where the flame was partly reduced, again in a manner contrary to experience, by the use of spirituous fluids. The village had now discovered that it wanted water all the year round. At present it had to depend upon its wells. But nature sometimes forgot Slocum Parva, and there were days when water was as dear as "tuppenny," and bad at that. Such were the statements overheard through the open window of the inn. They were boldly contradicted by the Conservative interest, otherwise called the Moderate, which remained outside the building in protest for this occasion. The Conservative interest, quoting a letter of one of its cousins,

argued that Australia got on very well in spite of droughts, since common laborers there earned five shillings a day. A voice from within said that Slocum might manage to make do with the wells, if some one would only put pumps to them. It was the everlasting bucket going up and down that troubled the water, and in summer made its muddy sediment yield "worms and insecks and things," instead of potable fluid.

A Conservative, suspected to be Mr. Grimber, created a diversion by asking who was to pay for the pumps. There was a moment's consternation within the building, when another voice replied mockingly, and with the expected reward of a guffaw, "His Goodness Gracious, to be sure," an allusion to the owner of the Towers as unmistakable as it was insolent.

"Men, men," cried George, in his cheery voice, "we don't want any stuff o' that sort."

The meeting now seemed to get completely out of hand, until its very promoters grew terrified at the spirit which they had raised.

When Bangs (his words were taken down) bellowed, "Why can't we have water-pipes, like the duke and Squire Liddicot?" the landlord himself grew alarmed, and said with becoming severity, "Gently, please."

It was anybody's meeting now, and a Camille Desmoulins might have run a free course. The wildest cries were heard amid the din.

"Oil-lamps for the main street!"

"A playground for the children!"

"Seats in the shady lane!"

Mr. Grimber turned homeward with the reflection that he should never have thought to see this day; and other well-disposed persons followed his example.

Then the meeting began to talk of letting the shooting over the old gravel-pits which were given to the parish after the great inclosure of 1810, and Bangs offered to bid.

The landlord put out the lights.

XVII

 HE great day of the election came at last—just because it had to come. They were all afraid of it as something impending, and would gladly have put it off. It was a fairish day, yet, to speak the truth, not much more so than the one that went before. You might never have guessed with what sort of event it was charged.

The result was a startling surprise. George got his man in, at the expense—of all persons—of the castle's candidate! Spurr triumphed over Mr. Raif. The Conservatives, who took for the occasion their second baptismal name of Moderates, had expected to have it all their own way. They were left with but four winners, Kisbye and the schoolmaster, Grimber and Fawke. Radicalism, treacherously calling itself Progressive to confuse the issue, had effected a lodgment in the sacred soil. Its victory had all the interest that might attach to the creation of a soul under the ribs of death. The other side took it so: Squire Liddicot thought that things were going rather too far; the ducal agent frowned; Mr. Kisbye said that George Herion was a firebrand, and that there would be no peace in Slocum till he was turned out of the place.

The Yellow Van

It was understood that there would be a full evening sitting at the Knuckle of Veal. The event had to be adjusted to consciousness, to be digested, so to speak; and where but in the village inn? The landlord, who had quite overcome his rather unprofessional displeasure of the other evening, was in his best humor. There was a flutter of expectation in the outer bar, as though new times were at hand. Bangs, the poacher, found other gossips already assembled in the parlor, old Skett among them, and Job Gurt—who would have been there, as at a post of duty, in any case.

It would be an error to suppose that the blacksmith was a sot. If he was a glutton for drink, he was also a glutton for work. He earned "good money," and, with his pickings in the season at Allonby, turned in an average five-and-twenty shillings a week. Sixteen of these shillings he gave to his wife for housekeeping; the rest he reserved for beer. As he had no children, he could not be said to be doing an injustice to his family. He began with his generous liquor at five in the morning, to clear his head of the fumes with which he usually charged it at night. His prudent helpmate took care that the house should never be without this restorative. He was a genuine Saxon peasant, and one of his remoter ancestors had probably contracted his final headache by a blow from a mace at Senlac. To be fair to him, however, it should be said that he was on this occasion extremely moderate in his potations. He had recently had a bout. He was now slowly

getting sober again, so that his system might the better respond to treatment with his favorite beverage on next bank-holiday.

These and other small fry were there to make an audience. The principal figures who were more intimately connected with the event of the day lingered, as befitted their state. The first of them to arrive was Mr. Grimber, the retired tallow-chandler, doubly respected as a Londoner and as a person of independent means. He may best be described as the essential ratepayer of the smaller sort, the despair of the champions of the lost causes in heroic ideals. He was absolutely self-centered, save for his immense reverence for wealth and station, and nothing could exceed his disdain for all who, as he put it, were fed, clothed, or educated at his expense. He had paid rates nearly all his life,—not without satisfaction to his vanity as a man of substance,—and for the same period had cherished a profound contempt and aversion for those who derived the slightest benefit from his enforced contributions to the public cause. In short, he was in every respect a genial model of skullcapped nincompoopery, alike in body and in soul.

On his entry, the others said in chorus, "Good evening, Mr. Councilor." It was a new form for the new occasion, and it was one that, as a precedent, would govern Slocum for all future time. Mr. Grimber replied, "Good evening, gentlemen." When his colleague, the schoolmaster, followed, he was saluted in the same way. His reply was, "Good evening,

gentlemen—and Mr. Councilor." It was another precedent for the ages. Mr. Kisbye, of course, was not for this company.

The defeated, and yet, in a sense, the triumphant, party presently appeared in the person of old Spurr. He was toil-worn, rugged, dirty as usual, and he had the air of some hunted Hebrew prophet who had momentarily left his wilderness in search of refreshment while dodging the wrath of a king. There was no sport to be expected from his taciturnity and from his total want of repartee. He even failed to comply with the formula. George, it was known, would be late, as he was still on his rounds. The sitting, therefore, lacked animation until the arrival of Mr. Fawke, a little man, now swelling with importance, whose face seemed to say nothing except that pudding was cheap. His flowing salutation brought the whole composition into convivial harmony with a sweep of the hand.

"I drink your 'ealth, sir, and proud to welcome you," said the ratepayer, raising his glass.

"An' I should loike to drink it, tew," piped Samson Skett.

Like most persons called for the first time to public station, Mr. Fawke seemed wishful to show that it had not made him proud.

"I 'ardly know 'ow it 'appened, I 'm sure," he said, "an' when I think 'ow many there is in this parish that knows more than me, I could almost throw it up. I can only do my best, that 's all."

Nobody helped Mr. Fawke at this stage, and a

humane person might have felt that he was rather hardly used.

"But, gentlemen, it 's no use tryin' to make believe. I never 'ad a day's schoolin' in grammar in all my loife—an' me to be a speaker, too!"

"Woire in, Fawke, and get your name up. That 's all you 've got to dew."

"Well, mates, I 'll say this for mysen: it 's come through no seekin' o' mine. I 'ad n't even no idee of it till I see my nime in the list."

A voice: "Come, now, did n't 'e say that, if anybody 'u'd ask 'e, you 'd make one?"

"I may have said it, but I asked no man to ask me, and I canvassed no man, neyther."

The voice: "What about Maw?"

Fawke, changing color: "Now I 'll just tell 'e all about that. Maw said he did n't think his name was on the register—casual-like, as we was passin' the time o' day. Well, I said I 'd look; an' there, sure enough, I found it, an' I jes let him know."

The schoolmaster: "Why not? Why not? What 've ye got to be ashamed of, man?"

Fawke, taking heart: "I certainly did say, after that, 'My number 's four on the pollin'-card'; but it went no further."

The voice: "There!"

Fawke: "The fact is, the act 's a bit too complected. It wants masterin'. 'T ain't so easy to put yer mark agen a name if you can't read the name. We 'ave n't all got the edication."

Grimber, contemptuously: "Education, educa-

tion—nothin' but that now! I speak as a rate-payer."

Job Gurt: "You 're reet there, maister. It 's a 'ard thing on them as 'ave got children. A child as might be earnin' a few pence a week to 'elp keep 'issen, taken away and sent to school—as you might say, by force of arms. It 's a 'ard thing on a parent, say Oi."

"It 's the law, and we 've got to put up with it," growled the schoolmaster. Even he thought that the parent had a case.

It was the matured deliverance of the rural mind on this subject. No one in that parlor spoke up for education; its warmest apologists simply held their peace. And while silly Slocum talks thus after its nature, tremendous Germany and tremendous America, with their systems polished to the last point of perfection, are waiting to spring on an unlettered prey. Truly, there is no fighting against doom.

"We want to be guided," said Fawke, directing his gaze to an aged person in the corner, who seemed to require propitiation. "We 're mere young uns at it."

It was the voice (for this person was the owner and embodiment of that organ), but it took not the slightest notice of him.

"I wish it 'd all passed more amicable and friendly-like," continued Fawke, still propitiatory. "I wish there 'ad n't been no opposition to the dook —as one might say. It ain't pleasant to 'ave a contused election 'mong neighbors."

"Contested," suggested Grimber, not unkindly.

"All my grammar 's self-taught," said Fawke.

"Well, you got a progrim o' your own, I understand, if it comes to that," said Grimber, sharply. "What 's your little game? I 'ope you ain't comin' on the rates for more money."

"I don't quite ketch your meanin', Mr. Councilor."

"Well, what 's your wheeze for the free and independent elector, your job line, speakin' as a tradesman to a tradesman?"

Fawke, clearing his throat: "The question o' the day in Slocum Parva, aye, an' Slocum Magna, too, is prizes at the flower an' vegetable show. You see, it 's like this here. Our fust prize is five shillin'; our second 's two an' six; our third 's only a shillin'. Now it ain't enough to encourage laborin' people. It don't pay, when p'r'aps you 've brought forward as many beans, 'taters, an' onions as 'u'd cover this table. The thing I 've been workin' for all my life is to get the money raised to seven an' a kick, five bob, an' two an' a half. That 's the way to encourage industry an' beat the furiner. An', mark my words, it 's got to come."

"It will be a tough job," said Grimber. "'Ow often do we meet?"

"A full hour every month," said Fawke, eagerly, "sometimes two; an' I mean to bring it on fust thing."

The discussion could not be maintained at this high level, and it soon began to decline into sheer incon-

sequence. Fawke became almost interjectional in his vain repetition of stock phrases—"I 've no edication," "we do our best," "it 's got to come." Grimber made an effort to restore it by a masterly digression on the water question. He recalled a time when the wells of London were condemned, owing to an outbreak of cholera, and when the shop of his father, an undertaker, like a second Temple of Janus, was never closed, night or day, for three weeks.

"I speak of a man as I find him," maundered the wretched Fawke.

Grimber looked as though he thought he would say something to Fawke; then again he looked as though he thought he would not. And the more merciful view prevailed.

A stir at the door, and George came in. "Good evenin', gentlemen all. Well, lads, we 've done it" —shaking hands with Spurr. The old man smiled in iron lines, and, by way of showing some excitement of sensibility, knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

Every kind of leadership soon makes itself felt, even the humblest. All pressed forward to shake hands with the peddler. Mr. Grimber did it with the unmistakable air of taking leave of him on his passage to perdition. Still, it was done. The schoolmaster thought he was proud to have had him in his class, but said only, "Well, well! Well, well!" with the qualified praise which he had formerly given to a successful lesson. The youngster had the self-possession of his new pride in himself. He was beginning to do things instead of merely thinking things

and hoping them—precious moment for all of us. He was alive with the new sense of opportunity. The village was not the narrow place he once thought. His success in his new trade showed that something might be done in Slocum, if one only tried. And now there was this second and greater success. He might start the village, as he had started himself, in some way of life less miserably narrow and bounded than the old one. It was no revolt against his betters. He was a peasant still, and recognized their right to rule him; all that he wanted was to be allowed to bear a hand. Regenerative ideas mature slowly, and no one gets new-born all at once. What a triumph if he could endow Slocum with a tight thatch and a pail of clean drinking-water all the year round! He was elate, radiant. Fawke tried to introduce his panacea of the flower show, but George waved him off with a laugh. "Never mind that now; let 's all have a chat, same as old times."

The proposition was evidently relished; the conversation at once took a more convivial tone, and the oldest chestnuts of anecdote began their weary and yet welcome round. There is still a market in the inn parlor for worn-out jokes, as there is one elsewhere for worn-out boots. Nature knows nothing of waste.

The wide, wide world, too, came into their talk, but only as the universe might come into the talk of astronomers. It seemed immeasurably far. Yet not always so. They mumbled cricket, even at this season, and it seemed to bring Australia very near to

them. America was remote as being less in their thoughts. The national game was, in a manner, their tie of empire. How this county bowled, how that one batted, rallied them, as experts, to a sense of a common interest in life.

George now called for a song, and though this request was evidently welcome, compliance was delayed by the usual sheepish unwillingness to face the company. One or two cleared their throats, and pondered, and gave it up, professing to have forgotten the words. The landlord at length came to the rescue with a contrivance expressly designed for emergencies of this sort, and superfluously introduced by Fawke as the "grammerphone," perhaps with the thought of his own educational deficiencies still running in his head. The function of this most dismal instrument seemed to be to make the minstrelsy of the music-hall accessible to the rural districts. The landlord adjusted the slides, not without difficulty, and touched the springs, not without mistakes. At length, after several false starts, the thing was delivering a metrical pleasantry on the subject of paper collars, in a far-off tone which suggested a revel of cockney gnomes in the bowels of the earth. Yet nothing could have been at once more impressively unearthly in its metallic travesty of the human voice, nor more commonplace in its general drift.

It was as disappointing in this respect as those sittings of unlettered mediums in which the sages of history revisit our sphere to talk the wisdom of

the copy-book in the vernacular of Whitechapel. It left the company cold, but not for this reason. They felt that it was dull, while they silently acknowledged that it was perhaps too fashionable for their comprehension. In short, they put it in the same category as the selections from Wagner at village concerts, performed by distinguished amateurs. In the one instance, as in the other, they were much too well-bred to complain. The judicious landlord saved them the trouble by covering the machine once more with its oil-cloth, and stimulating Bangs to harmony with the offer of a drink.

The poacher accordingly plunged headlong into a patriotic ditty, inspired by the war, with a burden of "England, be proud of your boys in brown." The choice of a color was but a tacit confession of the poet's inability to make khaki subservient to the purposes of his art. Whatever its faults in composition and execution, this was at least a vital deliverance, and it had the happiest effect. The whole parlor joined heartily in the chorus, and Fawke, in particular, grew manifestly reckless, as though meditating an immediate start for the front. The ice thus broken, Mr. Grimber next undertook to oblige.

"I ain't got nothin' new," he said, "but if you care for one of the old uns, here 's something that my old father learned from his father, who was a volunteer in the great French war. It 's about Napoleon Bonyparte."

An old song, and a song that might contain some

mention of the battle of Waterloo! Nothing more was needed to bespeak their most reverent attention. It opened as follows:

"Come, all you young men, beware of ambition,
Or else, in course o' time, you may alter your condition.
Oh, think upon 'is woes who was born to be a yero,
And now is gone to end his days in the isle of St. 'Eleno."

There were twelve verses, and they traced a career of misguided ambition from the cradle almost to the grave. In the treatment of it, and particularly in Mr. Grimber's rendering, this dazzling but irregular genius became an awful warning for the rising manhood of Slocum Parva of the dangers of discontent with their lot. He seemed to walk the earth again to impress upon them the great truth that if they were not exceedingly careful they might cease to be British boors. He had probably served the same purpose for their grandsires, and so had not lived altogether in vain. The song was thus of real social and political significance in its solemn echoes of the teaching of the catechism in regard to contentment with the state of life to which we are called. The implied rebuke seemed especially to come home to Mr. Fawke, with his newly awakened desires for civil and even for military distinction. He sat silent, as though meditating, with thankfulness, his exceedingly narrow escape of a throne.

They were at the height of their rude revel when a child from the village came in and handed a letter to George. It had just been left at his cottage, and the messenger who had brought it from the agent's room at the castle said it was pressing. So few letters, pressing or other, came to them that all present boded something momentous, especially when they saw the young man, as he opened it, turn deathly pale. He read it again in the perfect silence, dropped it, and staggered forth without a word. One of them picked it up and without ceremony read it aloud for the benefit of the company. It was a formal notice to quit, on the ground that the cottage was wanted for a new laborer on the estate. They all realized its dire significance just as fully as George. It meant ruin. Without Slocum as a center, his little business would be nothing; and for a man under the ban of the castle there would be no other footing anywhere throughout the countryside. "A fancied summat was comin'," said Job, "when A see the agent makin' a ugly face."

XVIII



ITHIN a fortnight of that day, so swiftly was it done, George Herion was in London, earning his living at the dock-side.

Thus the blow fell. There was the agent's decree of expulsion, for such it was, and no valid appeal. The duchess, their one friend, was in town, amid the whirl of her first season, as effectually out of reach as Arcturus. If she had been at their door, they might never have dared raise a voice to her. The duke's agent was the duke, the duke was the duchess, in their simple minds. It was all one great machinery of fate which crushed them at their appointed time. To those immortals what were the likes of them?

Yet the mothers counseled submission, after the wont of their kind. "Do 'ee now 'umble yourself," said George's. "Tell un you be sorry-loike if ye ha' done amiss. It 's the mother as nussed ye tell ye so. Do, like a good boy."

"I 'll die fust, mammy," said the bad boy, the form of the appeal taking him back to the time when he drew his life from her breast. "If I went to heel, I 'd only get another kick for my pains. What did Kisbye sack me for? Nothin'. What have I

done sence? Nothin' again. Ask Peascod if I ain't always kep' within the act o' Parli'ment."

The poor old things looked at Rose, as though urging her to back them. But she shook her head. It was the second of her two moods, the dogged one. "I 'll stand by what 'e does," was all she said.

"Well, not to 'umble hisself, deary," pleaded her mother. "P'r'aps 'e could get a cottage somewheres else, an' not lose the bezness. He 's so cliver. Oh, the bezness, the bezness!" And the two mourners keened in chorus over the good thing dead and gone.

"It 's no use," said George. "I could n't get a foothold anywheres within ten mile of Allonby; an' if I did, they 'd hunt me down. With their mark ag'in' you, you 're a lost man."

"He 's goin' for a sojer, see if he ain't!" cried the old woman. "Oh, cruel, cruel! an' with my gal for 's wife!"

Even the daughter paled.

"I 'm goin' to London," said George, kissing Rose, "an' my gal 's goin' wi' me. Will that dew?"

"London!" wailed the desperate old creature. "An' what 'll ye make there, ye silly sheep—that I should call you so! What 'll ye make there?"

"Make my fortune, mother. What I 've done once with a bezness I can do again. That 's the place to win the brass. That 's the place where everybody 's free."

The neighbors dropped in to condole. "What I 've noticed all ma little loife," said Job Gurt, "is this: Speak yer mind, an' you get the sack. You

don't get it for speakin' yer mind; you get it, that 's all. But it 's just as good as though you got it t' other way. D' ye think they 'll chalk up more beer for 'ee at the Knuckle o' Veal because you 're what 's called a victim? 'T ain't loikely. A would n't do it mysen. Publican 's got to live. My old feyther told me that when I wur a boy, an' I 've found it roight."

An invincible terror of their betters, as beings mighty to hurt, was the note with most of them. There was the life of habit, with all its drawbacks, and how change it without risk? "When ma missus went off for a week last Easter to see her mother, I missed her tongue. A take ma Bible oath on it, so I did. When she 'ad 'er say I was payin' as I went on." It was Job still.

"You 'd be a good plucked un, even if you was a leaseholder, young man," said Mr. Grimber. "People can't afford to 'ave so much sperrit when their rates is included in the rent."

Mr. Bascomb slipped two sovereigns into Rose's hand, and then went home, with a sigh, to read "The City of God." Mr. Raif called, as in duty bound, but it was only to shake his head. The domestic chaplain had caught George in the very act of his defiant utterance as to making his fortune in London. He took leave of the outcast meekly, yet as one giving thanks that he was rid of a knave.

The little home was broken up. The mothers took most of the furniture to store for happier times; the rest was sent to town. The business had no sell-

ing value, and it was left to perish. The two outcasts went forth quietly. The omens were not all against them. It was a chilling spring, yet the blackthorn flowered; a redstart sang them farewell. But for this they might have lacked attention, the neighbors having been specially canvassed by Grimber, with a view to a display of masterly inactivity within doors. It was thus, in its lack of publicity, as in other respects, a sort of expulsion from Eden, with Peascod's walking-stick as a poor substitute for the flaming sword. They went forth to keep London the largest of all the cities of the world, and rural England, in a sense, the smallest of all the countries. None but old Spurr came to bear a hand with the traps, which George was himself to wheel to the station for transport by a later train. Few as these were, the little hand-cart would not hold all of them, and George looked round for a lift.

It came at a turn of the road. The yellow van hove in sight, not in marching order at present, but merely bound for the station, itself to take train to a distant center for the opening of the spring campaign. Only a carter's lad was in charge this time. The lecturer, the wife, the baby, the posters were to join at a later stage, and, for the moment, the vehicle looked all forlorn. The driver wanted but a word to induce him to hoist the bundle on the tailboard; and with a "gee up," he took his place behind the little cart. The two old grannies, yet to be, hid their faces with their aprons and ran indoors. The same thought had come to both of them in a

flash. It looked exactly like a funeral procession—fourth-class.

They gravitated toward the east end of the great city; and, while waiting to turn himself round, the young fellow took his unskilled strength into the market and found a job at the dock-side. At the sight of their dismal lodging in dismal Poplar, Rose wavered for a moment in utter heartbreak, and would have written to her august friend. But George sternly forbade, strong in his confidence of righting himself, grim in his disdain. Nobody was to know of this fleeting experience of discomfort; even the mothers were to be spared details. Rose was nothing loath on that point. Her peasant pride revolted at the thought of the admission of even temporary failure. All would come right so very soon, and then she and George would return to Slocum in state, wearing new Sunday clothes.

The duchess heard of it, for all that, if only in the postscript of a belated letter:

"Your young friends Rose and George are now your neighbors in town. Herion, I hear, has rather lost his head with some notion of making his fortune in London, and, on the strength of it, or perhaps we had better say the weakness, has been disrespectful to the agent. Anyhow, he has taken himself off with his pretty little wife."

It was Mary reporting the reports of Mr. Raif. So, notoriously, is history made. But the squire's

daughter had enough to think of just now to excuse her from trying to get her information at first hand. In spite of the drawbridge at Liddicot Hall, many worries and anxieties had crossed the moat, and father and daughter agreed that all thought of a season in town was out of the question. With Tom at the front, they lacked the spirit for gaiety. They lacked even the means, after the heavy pecuniary sacrifices entailed by his outfit and departure.

So Augusta read her postscript, not thinking there was very much in it, and went on with her season. It was a sad season,—the shadow of the war was over it,—though the devotees of pleasure managed to pick a bit here and there, like some sick navvy at his third helping of rabbit-pie.

Yet even they had their trials. There was always that weekly picture-book of the dead in the illustrated papers, with its portraits of the poor lads who had been laid low on the veldt. The war seemed a monster that devoured youth. There they were in all the smartness of mufti or of uniform, beardless, many of them without the barber's art, clear-eyed, ingenuous, and, for all the manly glory of their sacrifice, sheer mothers' boys. Yet the customary things had to be done, for gaiety is one of the public services, like the water and the gas. When the public courage seemed to faint, the venerable Queen came out and was driven through the cheering streets, guarded, tended, as well as attended, even in her carriage—weary as with the memory of innumerable pageants and with the sense of the vanity

of things, almost immobile, bowing, if one may say so, mainly from the eyes.

Incessantly they pitied themselves, especially when they went to bed without a headache, and they left town for Easter with the most sincere conviction that they needed a thorough rest. Strengthened and refreshed, they came back for a great dinner-party at the duke's, a court concert, and a thousand and one nothings which left them thoroughly exhausted by Whitsuntide. There were no court balls—for one reason, because, with eight thousand of her Majesty's Guards in South Africa, there were no dancers. There were still enough soldiers left, however, to make a brave show for the trooping of the colors for the Queen's birthday, and a braver, if possible, for the regimental dinners of a later stage. The first meet of the coaching club was pretty. The duke had promised to drive his own coach, but at the last moment he had to confide Augusta to another charioteer. He was engaged in finishing a weighty literary deliverance on the causes of the depopulation of rural England, to which he had been urged by the editor of a fashionable review.

A débutante is the imperious need of every season, of such a season above all. Augusta was the nine days' wonder, and, human nature being what it is, that was enough for her. London was new to her; she had but passed through it on her arrival in England. Her self-possession was much admired in the circumstances. The truth is, she found it not by seeking for it, but by a lucky accident. She was

so intensely interested in what passed that she was often able to forget her own share in it. She resembled those favored persons on the Elizabethan stage who were at once parts of the audience and parts of the spectacle. Often when she was the real center of attraction in a group she was eagerly and interestedly aware of everybody in it but herself, and so took it with a quiet absorption of curiosity which served her as well as the hardihood bred of a dozen campaigns. Her first drawing-room was a kind of waking dream in which she was mainly busy with the memories of a notable tale of fairy-land read years ago by the fire in a ranch.

There were tableaux at the Great Opera House. It was all society under a hat—a big hat, of course. Society filled the bill in every sense; the humblest supers on the stage were personages, so were the very gods in the gallery. Royalty swept the circle from its box. It was a Mask of Peace and War,—something for a charity,—with the colonies offering toffy to mama, and the massed bands of the Guards —the poor Guards were nothing but band, with all the men at the front—blowing "Rule Britannia" toward the universe. Public enthusiasm took its temperature from the evening papers. There were good telegrams that night, and the house felt good along with them.

After the entertainment came supper at the restaurant. When Augusta saw what a pretty sight it was down-stairs she canceled the order for a private room. A few of the tables were perfect constellations. But it was very mixed, and there were

dreadful-looking people here and there, guzzling like trusts at feeding-time, and positively trying to make believe they were hungry. This was finance. Kisbye was among them, and he had the impudence to try to catch the duke's eye! What a mixture it was, and no mixing—home and foreign nobility, South African millionaires, mincing stage misses. Dying is about the only unaffected thing in some lives. Everybody that was anybody in any line—that seemed to be the rule: a collection of "bests," even in depravity. It gave one a sense of power, in a way. Here, at least, were all the people who had found out how to do things—even those who could only talk cleverly about doing them; for the distinguished author was not wanting, as a matter of course. Even authors must eat; and society seethes something better than pottage for the sons of the prophets. The Prince had won the Derby a second time, and the duke was to dine with him at the Jockey Club in honor of the occasion. The duchess received her Majesty's commands for a performance of opera at Windsor Castle.

In a letter Augusta gave an account of these gaieties with this postscript, in answer to Mary's:

"I think the Herions have made a mistake, but we shall see. I like his pluck, all the same. Good night, Mary. I 'm writing this before turning in. I shall have a surprise for you soon. It will be a surprise visit—a stranger! male sex! There, you must do the rest for yourself. Now get a wink of sleep, if you can."

XIX



IR HENRY LIDDICOT is out of sorts this morning, as he sits at breakfast with his daughter in his moated hall. He has had a kind of threatening letter from a money-lender, and not his money-lender, but the other man's. The other man is his son. Tom, it seems, has accepted accommodation to gentlemen about town as generously as it is usually offered in the initial stage. He is deeply involved, in fact; and the money-lender, who signs himself Claude Vavasour, thinks that the squire may like to know. The squire does not like to know in the least.

"I thought I 'd cleared him nicely before he went out," he says. "I call it sly."

"No, no, father—not that!"

"Who is this fellow with a name out of a playbill? And what are we going to do?"

Mary sighs at the thought of another appeal to the family solicitors. It involves a confession of a most embarrassed state of affairs. Messrs. Stallbrass, Stallbrass, Fruhling, Jenkins & Prothero—where do family solicitors get these appalling collocations?—are a sort of outer conscience for the squire, and he approaches them in his difficulties

like a naughty boy. The girl knows what those difficulties are even better than her father. His poor eyesight has long made him dependent on her for clerical work.

"What are you going to do, father?"

"Put the letter in the fire."

"And Tom? Remember he 's not here to look after himself."

"I 'm tired of looking after him—mess, clubs, turf, life about town—there 's no end to it. Why did n't I send him into a marching regiment? What are you huddling up there, Polly?"

It was Tom's little bills for his late equipment for the front as an officer of a crack regiment: luncheon-baskets, cases of wines and spirits, guns, polo-clubs, golf-tools, a truly edifying variety of fancy shirts all consigned as "urgent military stores."

"Ah," he said, as though mollified in some curious way, "it 's a dearer trade than it was in my day. March of progress, I suppose." But he said no more.

There was silence for a while, broken only by the chipping of an egg-shell.

"I gave him all he wanted," he added presently, "and ready money, too. I don't see why he should spring all this private debt upon me. The land won't stand it."

You never could answer for the squire's mental machinery as an implement of research. Perhaps somewhere in the background of his mind was an idea of the burdens upon an acre of Liddicot land

as they had been accumulated by the slow growth of custom in the course of centuries. So much may be conjectured, for he murmured: "There 's you and me, and Tom, and your Aunt Dorothy, and your Aunt Elizabeth "—and with that he seemed to give it up.

An expert might have followed up the clue in this way: Not only did all the persons named expect to reap and garner the acre for their private needs: there were the poor relatives, as well as the entailed ones—a venerable second cousin or two in foreign boarding-houses to whom the squire was "good." Further claims were represented by the pensioned servants and other dependents, one of them an old fellow in the next cottage to Skett's, who had been surly to all and several for the last fifteen years of bedridden impotence on the strength of his having carried the ferrets in his pocket when the squire went ratting as a boy. Then came the farmer and his laborers, with their respective wives, children, and hangers-on, according to degree, who naturally expected to live by the land. Each claimed his share, big or little. This was only the pure ideal of the arrangement. Some got the share only now and then; others never got it at all. The fractions, as they stood in the scheme of benevolent muddle, always overran the total. The acre would n't go round. The attempt to make it behave itself was the standing puzzle of the patriarch's life. The squire and his son and daughter of course had to come first. He was sorry for those who came last and he thought the government ought to be ashamed of itself.

"Could n't we cut down the living expenses, dad?"

"Be reasonable, my dear. We used to be almost a first-class house; we 're hardly a third now. How many people have we about the place?"

"Quite fifty."

"Thought as much," he said, with a quiet chuckle. "Cut it down if you can. We 're undermanned in stablemen and keepers; we have n't a single warrener. Where are you going to begin—on the home farm?"

"Do we want all those mechanics idling about?"

"All right; sack your bricklayer, carpenter, painter, and wheelwright, and get it jobbed outside. But take care, Polly, or you 'll have the moat in the cellars one day, if not the cellars in the moat."

"Still—"

"I gave up the deer-park before you were born," he pleaded. "Reason—that 's all I want. Half our gardeners are boys. We 've hardly got anything under glass. But I'm not exactly going to the greengrocer for my peaches, for all that."

"Well, father, but—"

"And I don't think you 'd like to put down the laundry, Mary, with all these new-fashioned complaints about. Come, now, let 's stick to something or give up the game."

It was his way of looking at life. He had brought up his son on it. Some such thought was in Mary's mind.

"Then I 'm afraid Mr. Vavasour is inevitable," was all she said.

"No, no; I don't go so far as that. Sorry I 'm a magistrate: I should like to put him in the moat."

"He 'd walk still, father. It would only be a second ghost at Liddicot."

"It 's Tom's extravagance," he began. But then he thought of his boy at the front, and his anger melted away. Such a good fellow, such a nice, manly sort of lad—a first-class athlete, the best gentleman jockey in the county, so simple and straight with his breezy belief that youth was the season for enjoyment and that the chief business of his elders was to push him on without any exertion on his part! Only wanting everything he had a mind to, and prone to measure himself with the best.

"It 's my fault as much as his," he mused. "I ought to go to headquarters and give him a lift. I know one or two at the War Office—used to, at any rate. It 's a mischief we can't entertain a bit in town this season. And yet it 's nobody's fault, after all. It 's the state of the country. What are you to do with a wretched government that won't look after the landed interest?"

He took up a newspaper, but it seemed only a fresh cause of annoyance, for, with the exclamation "Gadflies!" he threw it down again.

Mary caught it as it fell. They were attacking his precious boy, by implication, in a scathing diatribe on "Our Military Dunces," provoked by some fresh blunder at the front. These unfortunate persons, it seemed, had learned nothing of their trade, and consequently they had nothing to forget. The

particular insect in question had dipped its sting in a recent report on military education, and it left venom with every wound. Sandhurst was a mere survival of the practical joke; the cadets at Woolwich took their lessons of application from a muzzle-loading howitzer without a carriage; even Aldershot was nearly as bad. The military geography, in spite of the manuals, was child's play. It was sleepy hollow everywhere; ignorance was positively worshiped throughout the army.

The poor girl dropped the paper in her turn. A tear trickled down her cheek,—for Tom's sake,—and she wished she could horsewhip somebody. It was a new and ghastly light on the absent hero's contempt of book work, and his amiable derision, a grace in itself, at the expense of the fellow that "swots."

"It 's a lie!" thundered the squire. "That lad's education, first and last, cost me seven thousand pound." He was not grumbling now; he was only protesting against the attack. He was proud of the cost. It was part of his duty to his son to give him the best that money could buy; and in this, of course, as in most things, the more you paid the more you had. It was at the root of his philosophy of life.

"A fine sum," he murmured, after a pause, "to be at the mercy of the pull of a trigger from such as them!"

It was the expression of his disgust at the thought of all that invested capital in the graces of mind

and station under the rifle of a crouching farmer. It made him realize the cost of the war.

"And they pretend he can't spell, father! Did you ever hear such impertinence?" The same thought was in both their minds. It was all personal to Tom.

"All spite—all newspaper spite," he said. "Some of our little comforts have reached the front, I suppose, and they can't bear the thought of it. Such people never can. Just see what they say about the pursuing column."

It was a mocking account of a so-called flying column, hampered with portable beds, wash-stands, and what not, including tents of a cool green to baffle the sun. The column flew all the same, apparently under the influence of a terrible colonel who could put up with a dog-biscuit for ration, and who sent all the finery to the rear. Tom's regiment was actually named, with the additional fact that at the end of the day the mess still managed to appear in some approach to suitable evening wear.

"That 's Tom all over," said the old man. "He 'd be lost without his change at dinner-time. But green 's going too far," he added reflectively. "It 's a bit foppish, if you ask me."

Some misgiving appeared to enter the girl's mind. She echoed him no more. There was none in the squire's. "I know that sort," he said, harking back to the abstemious colonel. "Promotion from the ranks, eh? All done to curry favor. I suppose he 's one of K——'s lot."

The force of manly indignation could no further go. K—— was that tremendous figure, hated of the squire and his kind for his unseemly passion for the rigor of the game of war—a passion that threatened to spoil the army as a good thing for men of family. It was the old ideal of military service perishing under the rude shocks of the new men—the men who were for bringing a gentlemanlike calling back to its old realities of berserker fury and berserker sweat. The fury was all very well in its season. It was so easy to die in that game, as in tiger-shooting, or, for that matter, in riding to hounds; but it was disgusting to think of having to run the risk without the relief of the elementary comforts of home.

Mary was silent still. She thought of a passage in one of Tom's letters in which that amiable youth had related, with such spelling as he could muster, an adventure of his own with the personage in question. A group of officers of Tom's regiment at Cape Town, on easy leave, were laying themselves out for a round of social pleasures while waiting for "another flutter" at the front. The leave had been had for the asking before K—— arrived to take matters in hand, and the distraction of the hour was a game of pool. To the assembled heroes enters suddenly a grim figure in khaki, colossal, with little to distinguish his rank but his commanding port and a something in the solemn glare of his eye that strikes awe into the beholder. It is K—— himself, come down in a night and a day of incessant traveling to

whip up stragglers. "What are you doing here, gentlemen?" "On leave, sir, from the front." "Get back to the front by the next train, or home by the next steamer." "Pretty cool, and for a chap in the Engineers, Polly!" said Tom. "Guess how he 's loved."

It was not that Tom was a milksop; he could be as hard as nails on occasion. But he thought the little relaxations were due to his position, and he was hard to balk of them. He shared his father's contempt for the status of the enemy,—mere field-folk who took their coats off to it,—and he 'd be hanged if he was going to go dirty just because he was fighting them. He was born to cleanliness, and he was going to have it to his shroud. Had n't he read somewhere that the Spartans prepared for the shock of battle by dressing their hair, and were found so employed just before the shock of Thermopylæ? Tom, after all, was not so exigent. All he wanted was a brush-up when his work was done.

Polly had perhaps taken it that way at first,—certainly the heroic figure had found litle more favor in her eyes than in Tom's,—but gradually, in the course of this troubled morning, with its themes of public and of private sorrow, it had been borne in upon her that, after all, here was a man. And looking at the poor old inheritor of a name before her, and thinking of the brother whose faculty and character were the only hope of their house, it had come upon her that what the Liddicots wanted was exactly what the nation, by God's providence, had

found—a man once more. Such a feeling must ever weigh heavily on the woman in societies that still compel her to appear only by her champion in the lists of life. Fain would Mary have mounted to the topmost tower of Liddicot to look for such a helper, like a second Sister Anne.

XX

THAT night's post brought a welcome change of ideas.

"Well, Mary, here 's your surprise [wrote Augusta]. My little brother has arrived, and he 's going to see you. If I know him at all, he 'll be at Liddicot about as soon as this. I 'm the big sister. If you see the slightest sign of his forgetting it, let me know. Arthur is his name. He has just left college, after doing pretty well there, and he is looking round to pick up notions of things before making a start. He 'll do for a boy or a man, just as you choose to take him. Was n't it our ambassador here who said that America and England might do worse than swap school-boys, now and then, just to give each other points? Well, here 's our sample, for want of a better. And now what are you going to do about it? He means well, Mary; be as indulgent as you can.

"He 'll cheer you up, perhaps: change of personality is as stimulating as change of air. He will stay at Allonby, of course, and that will bring him within delightfully easy reach of Liddicot. No keeping him in town—impossible. Wild horses could n't do it, and certainly not the tame variety at our dis-

posal. He 's very keen about the country life, and he calls poor London Britannia's case of swelled head. This just to let you know what an impudent young monkey he is. Be a mother to him, Mary, all the same.

"Keep him till we all come back, which will be soon, for the season wanes. It will be easy: you have only to let him spend his time with you."

This was the answer:

"Delighted to put him up here. Must have him, in fact. Father says you can't begin burying alive again, at Allonby; you 'd be five centuries too late. Not but what there was something to be said, etc.—which I mercifully spare. Who 's to keep off the ghosts from a lone man in your marble halls? And, besides, if he does n't want society, we do. Please, Augusta, lend us the baby out and out. We 'll take such care of him. Just wire the hour of his train."

Within the shortest time possible after that, two figures might have been seen crossing the moat at Liddicot in a dogcart. One of them was the man in livery with the reins; the other was a stranger, still early in the twenties, who was manifestly an expected guest. He was like the average guest of his years at an English house in being of fair height and of good muscular development; also like him in wearing tweeds and a bowler-hat, and in being scrupulously clean-shaven, so as to give his coun-

tenance the full benefit of every Roman line. Beards are only for the ages and races that make futile attempts to rule mankind with a poor chin. He looked uncommonly English of his age and standing; that is to say, uncommonly Greek. The Hermes of Praxiteles might have come straight from Oxford or from Harvard. Mary thought he would do quite nicely as she spied on him from a turret-window. There was barely time to dress for dinner, so she left the squire to receive him.

On coming down she found them both ready for her, and the guest greeted her, yet without a touch of familiarity, as though they had been friends for years. She had but few categories for her fellow-creatures, and while waiting to examine this one more at leisure she hurriedly tried them, only to find that they would not do. The "thinks so much of himself" pigeonhole was a wretched fit; he evidently thought so much of her as a woman, and of the squire as his senior and host. He was quietly deferential without fear—the perfect blend. It was the mixed American system, though she did not know that, in one of its happiest results. He had been carefully trained, and from puppyhood had never been allowed to feel shy at the sight of drapery. His manner of retrieving a fallen handkerchief at the very outset left nothing to be desired. Later on he proved simply lynx-eyed for a longing or a need in this finest of all sport, and he worked by the eye of his keeper rather than by the voice. The type was wholly new to the experience of the English girl, and it fluttered her.

Being fluttered, she next feared he was going to be of the "cynical and clever" variety, and felt slightly more ill at ease. His youthful candor made that as gross a misfit as the other. It was all done in a moment, so swiftly have we to jump to conclusions about one another at the first go-off. She had only just time to fall back on the merely "self-possessed" when it was time to move. To her great comfort, he seemed to pop into that receptacle without a crease, and, leaving him there, she was free to ask for further news of the party in town as they went down-stairs.

He gave it with a measured precision of utterance which was rather disconcerting. It reminded her of something she had read about the speech peculiarity of another of his countrymen. He seemed disposed to extend the principles of the Declaration of Independence to his syllables, and to leave them all free and equal, without a trace of accentuation that might render one the tyrant of the rest. Now she began to wonder if she should not shift him into the "learned and severe." But there was no present opportunity, for by this time they were in the dining-room. The plain truth is, he had the freshness of a boy who happened to have been born a man of the world. Having no pigeonhole for that, she meekly settled down to her soup, while he entertained the squire.

For this was really the way of it: the guest was host. Mr. Arthur Gooding did the honors of the neighborhood. He gave information, while seeming

only to ask for it, about views, soil, proportions of parkland, plowland, and meadow, which, as it affected the district at large, occasionally left his senior at a loss. He was never in that predicament himself. He took everything merely as a new conversational crisis to be dealt with as it arose.

"I am so sorry we have no one to meet you," she said; "but there is hardly a soul in the country just now."

"We may have a host without numbers," replied the young man.

Compliments always troubled Mary. This one, mild as it was, had the rather singular effect of making her wonder whether there was anything wrong with her hair.

She darted a swift glance at him to find out, with, of course, still greater inconsistency, for only a mirror could have served her turn. He was inquiring in a most ingenuous way about some of the magnates of the country-side, whose names he seemed to have at his fingers' ends, and asking how they spent their time.

The squire seemed embarrassed. "Well, let me see. Torold 's rather an authority on church restoration; Nethercott keeps the pack; Offley never misses a meeting at quarter-sessions; Rodeland 's very keen on model villages. The prime minister, though he does n't belong to this part of the country, is a great man in the Primrose League, and came down to our demonstration the other day."

"Anybody in business?"

The squire winced. "There 's no answering for people nowadays. Rodeland's son, I believe, does something in tea."

"Your prime minister must be a very interesting man," said Arthur. "I should like to meet him."

It was the nearest approach to the sense of a joke other than the practical that the squire had ever made in his life. He laughed heartily.

Even Mary felt inclined to transfer her guest to the "cheeky" pigeonhole forthwith. But there was something in his wistful innocence of all idea of presumption that made her hold her hand. It was evident that he had come abroad for useful information, and that he would have sought the Archbishop of Canterbury on the spiritual status of the Peculiar People, or the lord chancellor on kindred points of interest in British law, without any sense of incongruity. Of mortal man, and that included his "superiors," he knew no fear.

He seemed faintly apprehensive of something wrong, though he still had to feel his way to it. "I want to know everything about your Primrose League," he said. "We 've nothing like it on our side. Your prime minister would be the very man." It was said, not in apology, but only as amplifying his phrase.

"You see, he 's very high up," said the squire. "People of that sort are rather hard to get at. Besides, they are not expected to take an active part."

"I see, I see," said the young man, sympathetically—"tired."

"Well, perhaps so," said the squire. "They patronize things, you know."

"I think I understand—a mikado sitting motionless on his throne to preserve the peace of the world."

"They 've had push enough in their time."

"Of course," he said kindly. "People forget that. Why, you were good Americans centuries before us."

"Oh, my dear Augusta [wrote Mary, a few days after], he has been here less than a week, and he knows more about us than some who have been here a lifetime. He has been all the way to dear old Randsford—he calls it 'the circus.' He has such funny terms of expression, and all without moving a muscle. And what do you think he has found out about it? That all the while they pretended they did n't want the factory, because they thought it would displease the duke, they were dying for it, the artful things! You remember some dreadful London firm offered to bring all its work-people there, and talked of making the fortune of the place, and we only just managed to save them by threatening to cut off the water-power. Well, he has chapter and verse for it to show that they did n't want to be saved. Oh, he is such a person for finding out things! But do you think it can be true?

"After telling us that, he just said, 'Happy are the sleepy, for they shall soon drop off,' and then went on to something else. Father asked him whose clever saying that was, and he said, 'Nietzsche,'—hope I 've got the spelling right,—meaning some au-

thor, you know. Father thought it was the name of a new German chancellor. Oh, it was such a lark!

"Then Gurt's wife has told him something about Nopps's thatch that I 'm sure you and the duke never heard of before. Dreadful, if it 's true; but you know what those people are. He does bring home such a budget every day! The dinners are so lively now, and father threatens to raise the drawbridge on him and never let him go. It 's killing to hear him trying to give the story in the Gurt style. You know he 's as careful about his words as you are, and one might print him straight off. So just fancy him struggling with something of this sort!

" 'When they London work-people come down 'ere for the triumphant arches, old Nopps an' 'is wife think they might earn a trifle by puttin' up a pair of my gentlemen, as the inn was full. Well, the old couple takes the spare room theirselves, so as to give the lodgers the best un. Job 'elp the pore things to move, an' we make un as comf'abl' as we can, by puttin' un under the dry corner o' th' thatch. If the rain kep' off, they 'd ha' done pretty well, for I lent un a peddykwoat mysel' to plug the hole in the winder. But when the water come in, old Mr. Nopps he moan o' nights, an' she could n't pacify un, though he 'd 'a' been three shillin' to the good at the week-end.'

"It *was* so funny to hear him trying to shorten Mrs. Gurt's comf'abl'. He could n't do it to save his life, and when I tried to explain to him about clipping his *g*'s (by request), he kept waylaying me all

day with absurd challenges to a game of 'pin'-pon'.' He has the most ridiculous theories about what he calls our revised version of the English language. He pretends to think that the dropped *h*'s began with a natural tendency to move along the line of least resistance in the short spells of hot weather. The only way to meet a climate like this, he says, is to lay aside your coat and your aspirates when the hustle comes. Isn't 'hustle' a funny word, Augusta? And he does bring it in so cleverly now and then.

"Then he reads us killing little bits out of his American papers. Just listen to this: 'The Filipino is treacherous and deceitful. Besides, we want his country.' And isn't this a good hit: 'Mr. Pierpont Morgan is very fond of the Bible, due probably to the fact that it is a number of books merged into one.' *We* catch it sometimes: 'If America had not sold two hundred thousand horses and mules to Great Britain, the Boers would be all on foot by this time!' Father says he can't see the point, but I call it decidedly sly.

"I 'm afraid he does n't think much of Mr. Raif's model village. He calls it 'the penny in the slot.' Don't you think that 's meant to be rather disrespectful?

"And, would you believe it, he has actually met that odious person Kisbye, and has discovered he is not exactly the utter brute we all think him down here. It appears that he 's fond of music, and has some beautiful pictures and quite a library. Fancy!

"When we heard that, we had Mr. Bascomb to meet him, just to take the taste out of his mouth. A. was perfectly sweet: not a funny saying, not a laugh, but all reverent attention, as if he were at church. The old dear quite bridled under it, and I never saw him look so pleased. When he was gone, A. said it was the most wonderful thing he had 'struck' in his travels. That was the expression; I wrote it down.

"He does go into the strangest places and meet the strangest people. What *do* you think he did on Tuesday? You remember that dreadful Radical van? Spent the whole day with them, and bought a huge bundle of the trash they call their 'literature'! He seems to be quite keen about our country life, knows all the laboring people, has been to see old Spurr,—just as he might come to see us, you know,—and actually went to a meeting of the parish council and heard a debate on the pumps. He keeps apologizing for staying on, but we are so delighted to have him. Do make him stop till you come back, though it seems like a reason for not wishing for your speedy return."

"Keep him just as long as you find him useful [Augusta wrote in reply]. You know I sent him to cheer you up. I 'm glad you don't take him too seriously; he 's only a boy looking round. But he 'll be a man the moment he gives his mind to it. So we think."

XXI

IT is mid-August, and the family is returning to Allonby. The poor season in town has flickered out, but this new one in the country is to give due compensation. There is more cheerful news from the seat of war; the nation is in better spirits: society is expected to rise to the occasion.

For weeks the four hundred people attached to the service of the castle—agents, stewards, grooms of chambers, gardeners, keepers, the little army of the stables—have been on the move. The miles of walks in the great deer-park, trimmed with spade labor, have the precision of lines on a map. The dappled herds, scudding without sound of footfall through the glades, yield effects of low-lying cloud. The very river flowing through the domain seems to have been washed for the occasion. You may count the pebbles in the shallower parts of the bed, and the fish in the deeper. The mere osiers and river-grasses are organized schemes of color, intensified by the clearness of the stream. A fleet of tiny pleasure-boats, spick and span like all the rest, stands at its mooring in the lake.

Not a pond but can give an account of itself. The

frogs are unmistakably on the establishment; the squirrels, the birds, and all the other living things exhibit the freedom from fear which may be supposed to have characterized their kind in Eden. The trees have the cleanliness which is the coquetry of age. Their parasites are trained for sentimental effects of dependence, and where the withering limbs threaten collapse under the burden of centuries, their crutches are at hand. The same perfection of artificial conditions is seen in the great vineries as in the peach-houses and the apricot-houses, that are to be measured by substantial fractions of a mile, and in the tropical house a perfect university of floriculture, with a head-gardener as its principal dean of the faculty, and distinguished professors in the several chairs. Every tree, plant, flower, beast of the field, and fowl of the air, as a retainer of the house, seems to glory in its cultivated and individualized perfection.

The preserves especially are in magnificent order. A large party is expected for the shooting, and some are already busy with the grouse on one of the duke's moors in the North. The partridges positively languish for the 1st of September. The pining pheasants will have to wait for a month more before the head-keeper can redeem his promise of whole battalions of slaughter in well-stocked preserves. With these, and with the ground game, there is every hope of sport for the autumn and winter. When the birds have been silenced, the death-squeal of the rabbit will take up the wondrous tale. The ferrets,

whose business it is to serve these shy creatures with notice of ejectment, are already longing to be at them. Meanwhile an occasional rat tossed into their cage saves them from the lapse into vegetarian diet, and keeps them wicked for their work.

Nothing is left to chance: it is the note of management in this lordly pleasure-house. When the guns are ready for the game, the game must be ready for the guns. The ferret winds into the burrows and drives the rabbits into the open. The beaters drive them on to the line of fire, as they perform the same kindly service for the birds. This last ill turn, indeed, might seem to be enough to frighten all animated nature from Allonby as from a place accursed. But such creatures, being untroubled by school histories, which keep alive the memory of grievance, are incapable of bearing the malice of tradition.

The cultivated completeness of it all makes a profound impression on the American visitor. "And what may his name be?" he asks the head-keeper once, in a moonlight ramble, as a hare crosses their path.

"His name, sir?"

"Yes; surely you have him somewhere on the register. Shall we call him Leopold, just for the sake of the argument?"

Mr. Gooding's sole experience of sport is an occasional bear-hunt where the beast looks after himself, and the man follows his example: a blanket and a camp-fire for one, a cave for the other, and let the

best win. So they hunted the boar in Calydon. The fox-hunting of the Genesee valley may set all that right in time for the younger community. Meanwhile, if you want sport as a fine art, you must seek it in a country which is too small and too thickly peopled to let anything happen by accident, even a hen's egg.

The art of producing that egg in pheasantry, and rearing it to its maturity of flight in whirring feathers, is one of the triumphs of civilization. The sacred birds govern the empire. Parliament rises for them; the professions make holiday to await their good pleasure. The partridges are supposed to be wild, but that is only their fun. The main difference between them and the others is that they are watched in the gross, while the pheasants are tended in detail. Both have to be guarded day and night, and not merely against poachers. Stray dogs must not come near them, nor even stray cats. No footfall of the wandering lover of nature may render them uneasy in their minds. You can hardly get a country walk, for the birds. Even when you have the liberty of the manor, the keeper expects you to skirt his fields, lest you flutter the game.

"I suppose you don't insist on their going to church Sundays?" Mr. Gooding asks.

The keeper rises to the occasion. "Well, if they did, they 'd hear summat to their advantage in the exhortation to 'all ye fowls of the air.'

"Fact is, sir, you must have it so, or do without your sport. The pheasants has to be nussed like

babies from first to last, leastways them as is hand-reared. Some tries to manage it for theirselves, but they 're ontidy mothers. All I ask them to do is lay their eggs. After that it 's like the advertisement—' we do the rest.' If they get that business over nice an' early in the year, that 's all we want of 'em. My men 'll go through the bracken an' pick up the eggs, an' I 'll see to the hatchin'. That great clearin' close to my lodge is where the hen sits on 'em—common barn-door fowl, that 's your motherin' bird, ready to lay on anything, from a duck's or a pheasant's egg to a lump of plaster of Paris. Pity we can't put 'em on to some of the poor wizened babbies born in the cottages."

It is a pregnant saying in these days, when there is some danger that mere human mothering may become one of the lost arts, crowded out, as it were, by societies for the improvement of the mind, the development of the individual, and other equally pressing concerns. Perhaps the European cuckoo is destined to be the emblem of the womanhood of the future, with her startling invention of mothering by deputy. The cuckoo dames of social life, who are mothers last, whatever else comes first, should include a bird of this variety in their aviaries. It would be interesting to learn from closer observation how the bird employs the abundant leisure which she derives from the neglect of her offspring, and, incidentally, from the destruction of that of her neighbors. It is probably devoted to the more intelligent contemplation of nature, the more refined care

of her plumage, the improvement of her voice, and the power of visiting at seasons when so many other birds are kept at home.

Arthur sticks close to the keeper by day and frequently by night, wondering at the varieties of life in the world. Sometimes, in their wanderings through the woods, they come upon huge gibbets whereon the withered bodies of weasels, stoats, rats, hawks, and what not that prey upon the game, swing high and dry in the wind as an awful warning to their kind. And ever at intervals, from distant clumps in the prospect, comes the sharp crack of the gun as some new offender falls.

All day long the under-keepers are on the watch to keep these marauders off the rearing-grounds. And one night Arthur goes out with two of the men to look for poachers. It is a ghostly round. No one speaks as they stalk through the awesome woods in Indian file. No one carries a lethal weapon; the law forbids: the gun is for the day alone. But a stout sapling of oak or blackthorn is still arguable as a walking-stick, and with that they have to be content. "Poachers 'll use their guns soon as look at ye," says a keeper, bitterly, "but us may n't. That 's English law for ye!"

For miles they wander through the dewy grass, with no incident but an occasional snare set by the poacher's jackal in the daytime and as yet unvisited by his employer. The jackal is the vague man, the most familiar figure of the country-side. You may see him every day taking mild refreshment in a

corner of the Knuckle of Veal, while his female mate squats outside on the sack which contains all their belongings. Nothing is known of the vague man but that he is one who "won't do a day's work when there is mushrooms about." It is insufficient as a characterization. Mushrooms do not grow all the year round, and the vague man seems to be out of work at all seasons. He looms particularly large now that the game is coming to maturity. He is untroubled by self-respect, and therefore by rancors. When the keepers warn him off their fields, he climbs the fence without a word, and seems to dissolve over its remoter side. But he has left his snare, perhaps, for all that, and the poachers know where to look for it on the moonless nights.

Suddenly, as the three walk, one of them stumbles over something in the grass, and a shape rises, only, however, to be instantly pinned to the ground again. A timely oath serves to establish its identity with humankind. Three others come to the rescue in a twinkling from behind trees, and the poachers stand confessed. Arthur grasps his cudgel and advances to the assistance of the struggling keeper, but the other holds him back.

"Ware stones, sir! Tim 's all right. He 's got a look at un, an' that 's all he want. We 'll know where to find un to-morrer mornin'."

The words are hardly out of his mouth when some heavy missile makes a close shave of Mr. Gooding's ear, and rebounds, with a thud, from a tree to the ground.

"Get behind a tree, sir! They 'll smash your face in. They got their pockets full o' that ammynition, you lay your life."

The next thing is a volley of oaths and stones together; and under cover of it the gang makes off.

"Who was they, lad?"

"Jinkins's lot."

"Wust lot in all this county, sir, bar none. Nearly did for yours truly last year in a public where I was havin' a glass to myself in the tap-room. A put-up job, but they was at the bottom of it. Three fellers, perfect strangers to me, comes in, all of a sudden locks the door, turns out the light, an' then makes tracks for me in the dark. I caught it, I do assure you, sir; but I slipped under the table, an' that kep' off the wust of the shower. When they thought they 'd settled me, they let theirselves out, leavin' me to guess the riddle of a broken rib. The table suffered wust—two legs kicked to splinters."

"You hunted 'em down?"

"'Ow could I, when there was no swearin' to 'em? They come from another part—p'r'aps forty mile away. The gangs work together for little things o' this sort. Aye, an' they put up the money to defend when we prosecute at the 'sizes, an' keep the families o' them as gets lagged. It 's a great business, poachin' is."

"So is sport," said Mr. Gooding—"trust *versus* trust."

XXII



HE duke and his wife—the "family," as Slocum always called them on these occasions—arrived in a few days.

Augusta's sense of responsibility for her second and decisive county season was deepened by a keener sense of her husband's importance. In London he was still, in a sense, one of the crowd. At Allonby he commanded homage as well as respect. The very porter that opened the door of his railway-carriage hurried through the operation as though in sign of a duke's exemption from the toll of tips. Seen in his proper setting as noble, as lord lieutenant of his county, and as only Burke and the recording angel knew what besides, he was manifestly a magnate of the first rank. You would have found his territorial mark of occupancy on maps of the planet in which they think nothing of crowding a settlement of five millions into a dot. His grandeur seemed to be heightened by the quietism which, on his return, he had resumed as a sort of second nature, and which was in impressive contrast to the strenuousness of Augusta's spirit. He seemed to belong to some fabled race that moved without friction of the

nerves, and prevailed only by the irresistible compulsion of silent and hidden forces.

The bustle of stately business that ensued on their arrival was still something of a new experience for the duchess. She was, of course, not wholly ignorant of the peculiarity which makes our older societies, seen from above, but a descending scale in parasitism, and, from below, a Jacob's ladder leaning on the stars. But here was the system in full view. Only one or two of the highest officers of the household were admitted to the ducal presence, and these, again, vouchsafed personal notice to hardly as many more. The agent who had just had the honor of audience passed through the antechamber without deigning a glance to right or left. It was impressive, no doubt; and so, Augusta thought, was that court of the first king of the Medes, where all were forbidden to laugh.

The duke seemed to find a certain comfort in it. He was at least among his own people. Everybody knew him at Allonby, though he was not always able to return the compliment. In London he was still as obscure, in most part, as the calif in a midnight ramble. Lordship is sometimes too impersonal in these days. He had once been much amused, when taking the number of an impudent driver, to find his own cipher and coronet on the door of the cab. As figurehead of a hackney-carriage company, he owned this insignificant person, and could have crushed him with a word. He did not speak the word, because his good nature shrank from the

thought of its devastating effects. But the offense was grave. He might have extended his drive by at least thirty yards for the shilling which he had tendered in payment of his fare. Yet, as he alighted at the door of his club, he was followed by the scornful cry, "There yer go, to enj'y yerself at my expense!"

Augusta turned with still fuller relief to the more human associations of the village. The Herions were naturally first in her thoughts. She had more than once determined to hear the other side of the story of their exodus. As it stood in the casual notice of Mary Liddicot's postscript, it was an act of rebellion. George had been "disrespectful to the agent,"—as though a midge had wantonly arraigned the splendor of the sun,—and he had rashly thrown up a profitable calling for the fatuous dream of a "fortune in London." So had Mr. Raif reported, and so, without giving a second thought to it, had Mary written. What was the truth?

Augusta soon found her way to the cottage in which the two mothers had clubbed their fortunes to make a home for Rose and George. They received her with the profoundest respect, yet at first, characteristically, without a single word on the subject which was nearest to their hearts. They were too much afraid of her for that. After all, she was still one of the "betters" who had dealt the blow.

"It do seem a powerful long time sence your Grace went away, sure-ly."

"Yes, and what changes!"

"Aye—at the war, loike?"

"No, at Slocum; the village seems hardly the same."

"Oh, that parish council! They 'll niver get beyand the well-water. Your Grace need n't be afraid."

Tabby Edmer, as she was called, had held the parable hitherto; but now old Phœbe Herion broke in with vehemence:

"I wish they was at the bottom of the well! They bin the curse o' the place."

"Hush!" said her mate, reprovingly, and then burst into tears.

"Tell me all about it," said the duchess, taking a chair.

"Oh, your Grace," cried Tabby, "they 're gone, they 're gone—out of all sight and knowledge—lost i' London! Look 'ee here." She drew from her pocket a returned letter, marked officially, "Gone away."

"What, your children? That 's nothing—only a change of lodging. They 'll soon write again."

"It 's bad luck, your Grace. I know my gell. She 's 'shamed of some trouble; that 's her sperrit."

"Shame for you!" said Phœbe, turning like some vexed animal on her mate. "Shame for you, to think your own flesh an' blood would n't have no feelin' for your trouble, too."

"Then she 's ill or dead," returned the other, quickly. "There, now; you 've said it yersel'!"

"An' my boy, too, then," faltered Phœbe, yield-

ing to the pitiless logic of the case. Whereat the two bereaved Rachels lifted up their voices together in a lamentation that filled their little four-square world with woe.

"There may be some mistake," said the duchess.

"No mistake, your Grace," wailed Tabby. "Read the prenting, 'O.H.M.S.'—'On Her Majesty's Sarvice'; it 's from the Queen. The first letter in all my loife I 've iver 'ad thrown back at me in that way. I know she was hidin' somethin' all along. But that 's her sperrit—never give in. Oh, they 're lost! they 're lost!"

"We 'll find them again," said Augusta. And she added gently: "But why did they ever go away?"

"Because they was druv," cried the old woman, simply, and with a touch of revolt in her tone.

"Oh, no, I assure you," said Augusta, in her haste to console; "I know all the facts." And then she stopped and bit her lip with the mortifying reflection that she did not know a single one of them for which she could vouch.

"You see," she went on, by way of groping toward the light. "George was dissatisfied with his life here, though I thought he was doing so well."

"Dissatisfied! Your Grace, he was makin' his fortune. Saved eighteen bright sovereigns 'n less 'an half a year."

"But he wanted to make more in London, it seems."

"God forgi'e me! but some un 's bin tellin' lies," said Tabby.

"I want the whole story from the beginning," said Augusta, sternly. "Right here."

Still they could not tell it; they were too much in awe of their visitor. These acquired habits of deference often cut clean athwart nature's rights. It is sometimes easier with this class to die than to offend a superior with a too intrusive claim.

So Augusta had to proceed by cross-examination.

"Was he not disrespectful to the agent?"

"Never spoke a word to the agent, or about 'un, all the days of his loife."

Augusta was still stern. "Please do me the favor to treat me as a fellow-creature, if we are to get on."

Plain speaking being now the line of least resistance, Phœbe said: "Then you 'd better have the truth about it—duchess as y' are. He wur clean hunted out of the place for raisin' 's voice at the 'lection. Gentlefolks won't stand that in their 'earts, though they make believe not to mind. You can't understand—how should ye? You 're a woman from over the sea. George wur a fool, an' spoke up, an' they 've ruined 'im. Now turn me out on the roadside, if you like, 's well 's 'im. I doan' much care."

Augusta jumped up, and, kissing them both where they stood in dutiful pose before her, drew them to her side on the old dimity-covered sofa. And there, duchess no longer, but just woman to woman, she heard the whole dismal story—Kisbye's "mark"

on George because of his little outburst on the night of the visit of the van; the agent's "mark" for the crime of leavening the parish council with a Radical candidate. The pair had well-nigh all the talking to themselves; their visitor hardly spoke a word, except to ask for a name or a date. And she was still as sparing of speech when the tale was done. She merely hurried back to the castle, and went straight to her husband's room.

XXIII

 HE was imperious no longer. On the contrary, the duke thought he had never seen her so radiantly cheerful since they rambled through the European cities on their honeymoon tour. He was up to the eyes in business, as a matter of course, but he gladly suffered her to make a feint of sweeping all his papers aside.

"Henry, you are going to make this the happiest day of my life."

"And why not every day after it, too?" he said gallantly. It was inevitable, with his feeling for her and his breeding combined. His brief training as a husband, however, had not left him free from misgivings of a kind. "A blue diamond is a vain thing, my Augusta, but still—"

"A blue diamond?"

"You 've been reading that nonsense in this morning's paper."

"No; only listening to two old women."

"Much the same thing, I should say. It 's an heirloom; and how do we know it is in the market?"

"True enough," she said, by way of taking him in his humor. "But something else may do."

"Well, let me know the worst."

"A little act of justice—of reparation," she said; "a poor insignificant thing—smaller than the diamond, I dare say. You see, I want to let you down as gently as I can."

"Perhaps I 'm going to wish it was the diamond, after all. Reparation for what?"

"You remember the Herions, Rose and George? You know I told you about them—the village wedding?"

"I remember everything you tell me, of course; only sometimes I 'm a little dense about names. Anybody wanting a place?"

"That 's just it. Oh, you do guess things so beautifully! They 've been driven out of their place in Slocum, and I want to bring them back."

"My dear Augusta, my finite intelligence can hardly take note of the fall of a sparrow. 'Driven out!' I thought they were here still—if I thought anything about it, I am obliged to say. What is it—want of house-room or anything of that sort? We can soon set that right, if it will please you."

"Henry, they have managed to offend the agent, from no fault of theirs, and they are ruined."

His face darkened slightly. "That 's rather a different matter. I don't like to interfere."

"Yet if it was all a wretched mistake?"

"Of course; but—what the deuce is it all about, I wonder?" he added a little peevishly, and pushing the papers back in real earnest this time.

"Something about the election."

"What election? There are so many of them."

"The—the parish council, don't you call it?"

"Scent recovered," he said, with a smile of relief. "My dear, what do I know about that? Yes, I do know something, after all. Was n't your swain the one who had his hand to the plow and looked back in his pride to organize an 'opposition to the castle'?"

"I dare say."

The words meant a good deal, and they both felt it. But she added nothing to them, and he saw that it was his turn next.

"He might have contrived to be civil to the agent."

"Henry, he never spoke one word to the agent, or about the agent."

"I am obliged to leave these matters to Willocks," he said, looking wearily at his papers again. "One thing I am quite sure of: he acted for what he thought the best in the interests of the estate."

"Do you think I would have troubled you with all this if I had not convinced myself that the mistake was on our side?"

Her tone betrayed a secret and a more searching pang. The sense of injustice was bad enough; but, human nature being what it is, here was something worse. She had expressed a wish, and a man had hesitated to gratify it. She had never before been thwarted in that way. It was a new experience for her, both as bride and as woman.

"It is hard," she said coldly.

He could not wholly miss her meaning, though the more intimate part of it escaped him still.

"'Pride goeth before a fall,'" she added; "but I thought I had been so careful."

This quickened his apprehension. "Augusta, what is it you want me to do?"

"To stand fair between them and the man who has wronged them in your name." Her very pride now forbade the slightest allusion to the more delicate point.

"Augusta, you do not quite understand. There is more in it than you think. We must know our own minds."

"We must do justice."

"As much as you like, but the larger justice. What are we here who have England in our charge —ten thousand, or a hundred thousand, I don't care which? A handful. Where should we be, and the country with us, if we could be made to sing small by any bumpkin fresh from his first pamphlet on the right of way to govern about a fifth of the human race? That 's what it comes to, in the long run, though this one 's only beginning with his own parish. We hold on just by mere prestige. I am not now talking about what the penny papers call society. I 'm talking of the whole thing, if you will have it so—the fabric of a thousand years. It is still a government for the people instead of by them—with all imaginable respect for the Parish Councils Act."

She was bitterly disappointed. So this was one of the implications of the part to which she had been disposed to take so kindly! This was the romance of the feudal relation on its business side.

"Oh, Henry, we want air here. It can't last."

"It has lasted pretty well," he said.

"Yes, too long, I 'm afraid. We are still playing at being in the middle ages, and without conviction, too. We 're grown-up children now: we must change our toys with the times."

"Toys!"

"These heights of worship and honor, those depths of reverence and submission. Do let us help people to feel that they 're alive."

"You seemed to like the toys, Augusta, when you began the game."

The reproach stung her, for it was true. Had she not taken a little too readily to her feudal part? There seemed so much to be said for paternal government when it was of the right sort. The duke's duchess had naturally liked to think so, since it gave her her opportunity (dear to every woman) as earthly Providence. The contrast with what she had left behind was so refreshing. How exquisite to have about one fellow-creatures trained for the petting, instead of a set of wild things of the wood whose only wish was to have you out of the way! So she had come to hold place and power in the Primrose League, to patronize local charities, to be a sort of mother of her people within the domain.

"I never thought of that," she said, more to herself than to him.

"Another riddle, Augusta?"

"Well, that our power to keep meant so much power to hinder and hurt."

"Power, I take it, is a sort of all-round thing.

And, you know, you 're a greater aristocrat than any of us, if you care to look at it that way."

"Henry!"

"In your sense of the claims of mind, manners, character—that 's all I mean."

"You are very complimentary this morning."

"Give us a little share in that praise, too."

"Oh, but—"

"Well, be as generous as you can."

"I suppose we 've got to be everlastingly trying to master people in this weary old life. Still, we might all start fair. It 's such a wayward sort of handicap here!"

"Which the same you might rise to explain."

"The inherited deference—the peak of the cap an institution, almost an act of faith! The paltry village education in manhood and womanhood! The social system a sort of worship of ancestors, and mostly other people's ancestors at that! The pettiness of it all—my God, the pettiness! Anything rather than that, even the fierce millions all straining at the leash for they know not what, but at least for the good of muscle and nerve."

He was nettled. "Why not? Authority must be maintained, worse luck for those who are rather tired of their share of the work. Is it really different, do you think, anywhere else in the world?"

She took up the challenge. "Perhaps there are places where they leave both sides to fight it out more according to their strength, without calling in the catechism."

"No doubt," he said, answering her according to her parable: "the best and the worst of places, where both sides, good and bad, are at it for all they are worth, with the powers that be as a mere bottleholder. Can anybody be sure which side is going to win?"

"Can anybody doubt it?" she said.

"A free fight of that sort might shake some of us to pieces. If all are born to the conflict, they are born to the weapons, too."

"What a reason for ruining a man—because he has shown want of respect!"

"If you come to that, what a reason for ruining him—because he wants brains!"

"It is a step forward in ruling castes, at any rate, poor as the step is. One day I suppose we shall have all the strength in the world at the service of all the weakness. But, Henry, we are talking at one another, and where are the Herions meanwhile?"

They both laughed.

This sally helped him to recover his temper, by restoring Augusta to him in all her glory. The curious by-play of their little scene was that the more he opposed, the more she insisted; and as she insisted, the more he felt the charm of the almost coquettish wilfulness of self-respect with which she had originally won him. Say, if you like, that he was the more ready to be impressed by it in matters of this sort because, in others, he was perfectly tired of the claims of his blazon.

He yielded a point. "I can't always do as I please. Who could, standing in my shoes?"

She felt for him, yet she could hardly bring herself to say so there and then. She knew that at times, with the solitary exception that was the all in all for her, he was doomed to be almost as free from personal longings, personal initiative, as the hero of the Bhagavad. It was his business, as a patron of his portion of the human race, to like what ought to be liked in rigid social convention, to do what ought to be done. Since her marriage she had been a silent but sympathetic observer of these trials of a fellow-creature who was everlastingly doing his duty. He was not merely lord lieutenant of his county: with his birth, his wealth, his position, there was no escaping that. He was a commanding officer of volunteers and of yeomanry; he held the commission of the peace, and frequently sat in the chair of justice at quarter-sessions. He patronized justice as he patronized the auxiliary forces, and as, in another and a more technical sense, he patronized the church by nominating to some four-and-twenty pulpits. He bred impartially for the course and for the cattle shows. It seemed all one to him, since the region in which his lot was cast was above that of personal tastes. It was his pride that one could never tell what he liked best from his manner of doing it. The only clue to his preference was to be found when he happened to travel beyond the circle of social obligations. Thus, while foundation-stones were hardly to be attributed to him as creature comforts, there was a certain taint of relish in his freemasonry. He bought pictures, statuary, curios,

without caring a fiddlestick about them, and simply by way of being civil to the arts. His wife's after-knowledge of all this showed her by what a mighty effort he must have broken one link of his chain when he stood forth before all the world to say: "This is the woman of my choice."

But he had said it; and how could she fail in grateful remembrance of it now?

"I understand everything," she said with great tenderness. "I leave it in your hands."

In spite of claims that, with her, were as those of birthright, she was still ready to yield to love what she might have refused to principle—full of most delicious contradictions in that way, and therefore the true woman still, or perhaps, after all, only the true human being. Her whole anxiety now was to save him from the pain of the conflict which she had raised in his mind.

"See these poor old people," she said; "hear their story. If you are satisfied, leave the rest to me. You need not appear in it at all."

But he was now, if possible, keener than herself.

"Better find the young people at once, and get it at first hand. The rest will be my part." And he led her to the door.

It was Augusta's triumph, whatever the issue. With all the higher claims, luckily, it is the greater the sacrifice the greater the joy. The smug religions perish: the faiths that are to supplant them wisely begin by calling for volunteers for martyrdom. Happy the nation whose women are never afraid to ask!

XXIV



TILL thirsting for information, Mr. Arthur Gooding thought he would like to tear out the heart of rural England in a motor-car. This mystery is usually the reward of years of toilsome observation. Mr. Gooding was in a hurry. America, to which he belonged, is in much the same state. He purposed to devote a day to it.

A project of Mary Liddicot's gave him the excuse for the adventure. Mary was the delight of his active and observant spirit, a constant stimulus to his sense of wonder. She was something quite new, as one of those who are still children at three-score and ten, if they live as long, and this by no mere reversion to second childishness. Simple and downright, she suggested an organism untroubled by convolutions of the brain. It was neither a fault nor a quality with her, but merely a fact. These childlike natures, seeing life solely in its direct issues, may be the most vicious creatures alive. There are adults of infancy in the jails, as well as in the country houses and honeysuckle homes. They are not unknown on thrones, and there they sometimes exhibit amazing powers of mastery. Where this ever-endur-

ing age of innocence is backed by a strong understanding, as in Mary's case, it is capable of yielding precious result. She was a yea or nay girl, a sort of high-bred Quaker, incapable of "point" in anything but her shoes. She often hit the nail right on the head in the most felicitous manner, yet, if you complimented her for epigram, she said, "Fancy!" not knowing in the least what you meant. Sometimes she seemed deliberately hard, sometimes quite insensitive; and then, again, you thought she was ready to swear blood-brotherhood with you on the spot. You would have been just as wrong in this case as in the others. You had given her a pleasurable emotion, and she showed it like any other child; that was all.

Mary and her father were going to London. The squire began it. He had received another letter from the mysterious money-lender, Mr. Claude Vavasour, hinting at the prudence of a friendly arrangement of Tom Liddicot's affairs. The captain being in South Africa fighting for his country, it behooved those who were interested in the honor of the family name to consider their position. Such was the impression that Mr. Vavasour contrived to convey, by suggestion, of course, without saying a single word that could be quoted to his detriment. It made the squire hot and cold, and finally led him to form the strong resolution of facing Mr. Vavasour in his den and having it out with him. Mary dreaded the consequences, and tried to dissuade her father—in the process, of course, only urging the

very things that made him more intent on his purpose. Then she said she would go up with him, as she wanted to go shopping. That was her nearest approach to a stroke of politic subterfuge, but, the squire having much the same cast of mind as herself, it served her turn.

Now came Mr. Gooding's opportunity. He proposed to meet them in town, and give them a lift, on their way home, in his car. Mary was wild with delight. It was untried being. With that prospect on her part, the squire's objection to the mode of transit was speedily overruled. They went up by train, on the understanding that their escort should await them next morning for the return journey.

So, early on the appointed day, the squire knocked at the door of Mr. Vavasour's office, situated in an old nondescript West End square under the lee of Buckingham Palace. Mary, who had been left below in the cab, found plenty to amuse her in the movement of the scene. She was still busy with anticipations of the coming trip when her father almost rushed back into the street, as pale as one who had seen a ghost, and a good half-hour before the time for their meeting with the young man. And at his heels, vainly attempting to perform the ceremony of conducting him to the door, was Mr. Kisbye!

It was Mary's turn to look pale now. She started, averted her gaze from the apparition, and gave a faint nod into vacancy in acknowledgment of an obsequious bow.

Yet that glance of a single instant had shown

her something more of him than she had yet seen. In their chance encounters of the roadside she had persistently cut him dead. She now realized him as of middle height and age, bald, with the swarthy look of a "foreigner," yet well dressed in the English manner, probably by way of an informal attempt at naturalization.

The effect was scarcely less startling upon him. He blushed through his tan, cast an admiring look at the girl, muttered something which seemed to die away on his lips, ducked again, and vanished.

The behavior of all, indeed, was as though each had been a ghostly visitant for the others. The squire had gone up-stairs to seek out an indeterminate money-lender, and had found his detested neighbor of the Grange. Mr. Kisbye had come down-stairs to show him out, and had encountered Mary, hardly a phantom, but still an entirely unexpected shape. Mary had been as little prepared for this sudden discharge of the hated creature at short range.

The old man threw himself into the cab, and darting his fist through the trap, gasped, "Home!"

"Father," said the girl, "home is Liddicot now; we can't get there in a hansom." And, in obedience to her amended order, the driver began to walk his horse slowly round the square.

"What is it, dad?"

"Don't you see for yourself, Polly? Our money-lender is Kisbye—one face of Satan under two hoods. An infernal usurer, with a place between ours and the duke's. And Tom in his toils!"

"Did n't he seem ashamed of being found out?"

"Never a bit."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'Who are you? I came to see Mr. What-d'-ye-call-'em.' "

"And then?"

" 'That 's my name in business,' says he, with a smile for which I could have choked him."

"And you?"

"I said, 'Oh!' "

"Well?"

"Then he fingered his watch-guard. It may come in useful if ever they want to hang him in chains."

"Of course, dear—and?"

"Well, you see, there was n't much to say after that."

"Father, you are keeping something back."

"What is there to keep? Well, then he came out with a rigmarole of his infernal shop-walker's civility and attention on the subject of Tom's affairs. His style was like a butler looking for a place. But his meaning was, 'What are you going to do about it? '—just that."

"Never mind, we can snub him to death, and then he 'll have to leave the county."

"Much he cares for that, you little simpleton. If snubbing could kill, we 'd have had him in his grave long since. Polly, there was mastery in his eye."

"Insolence, you mean, dad."

"No, not that exactly. That 's only his way in

the country—passing you with his coach and his grinning grooms in livery, as if he invited you to take it or leave it, the whole turnout. But in business he rubs his hands. He treated me like a customer, and was as sleek as if I had come to buy a necktie. His table is his counter, where it 's not his 'social board.' Polly, I detest that man!"

Mary thought she had the whole story now, but she was woefully in error. He was still keeping back something that he would have died rather than tell her. It was nothing less than the gentlest of all possible hints, on the part of Mr. Kisbye, that everything might be arranged if the master of Liddicot Manor would look favorably on the money-lender's pretensions to Mary's hand. Elusive as it was meant to be, it was still plain to the father's excited susceptibilities and quickened apprehension of danger to his house. He had risen in inexpressible disgust, and made haste for the door without another word.

In truth, the interview was Mr. Kisbye's opportunity, and, though it had taken him by surprise, he had done his best to make the most of it. He was in no hurry to be identified with Claude Vavasour, and he had hoped that his communications with the squire would for some time longer be confined to correspondence. On the other hand, he was indifferent to the accident of the discovery. It was necessarily Captain Liddicot's secret, and, though he had his own reasons for silence, it might at any moment become common property. Yet, having the squire face to face with him for the first time

in their lives, Kisbye thought he could afford to give a glimpse of his hand. He had lent freely to the spendthrift son, on poor security, and he knew perfectly well that he could never hope to see his money back. But he was willing to pay for his pleasures; and the dreary gospel in which he had been reared taught him that even this beautiful girl might not be unattainable by money wisely invested in the embarrassments of a falling house. He despised her father. His civility, as the old man had surmised, was due merely to his sense of duty as a shopkeeper. In the country he held himself as good a magnate as the best, and he meant to lord it with them, and over them, before he had done.

"Polly, Polly!" groaned the squire, as their cab still kept up its soothing perambulations, "he 'll get to Allonby one day, mark my words! That brute is the new landed interest: the Liddicot millennium coming to its fag-end. His office was hung with auctioneers' bills, as though he had half England in the market. What do you think of this for a crack of doom? 'Sutherland, Scotland. For sale, by private bargain, the Island Kingdom of Tillee. Winter shooting. Splendid golf-links,' and all the rest of it. A kingdom! Most likely for some American. By the way, when will that young spark be here?"

"He 's here already, father. There 's his motor on the other side of the square."

"I can't do with him to-day. We 'll go home by train."



Mary said, "Very well," and looked intensely wretched. That was quite enough for her father. In five minutes more they had transferred themselves and their slender hand-baggage—the rest had been sent on by train—to the shining car, and were picking their way through the London labyrinth to a great main road.

XXV



RTHUR saw that there was something wrong, but took no notice of it. His good breeding never failed, and he made short work of his salutations, as befitted the occasion. Besides, he was his own steersman, and for a good half-hour he enjoyed the full benefit of the rule against superfluous speech with the man at the wheel. He had not forgotten, however, before starting, to make all taut for his visitors, and particularly for the lady. "When we get the way on," he said to Mary, "it may blow half a gale." So he abounded in practical suggestions as to veils and wraps and tresses struggling to be free. His own outfit was simple in the extreme, and the girl was thankful to him that he forbore goggles and a leather jacket. The squire suffered himself to be rigged for rough weather without a word. It was a new experience for both of them, for him especially, and he had his misgivings. He might have said, with old Sam Johnson, when they talked of conceivable travel at something over ten miles an hour: "Sir, it would be impossible; you could not breathe." They had forgotten that.

The horse traffic of the London streets did not

appear to like the looks of them. Mr. Gooding considerately gave it time to correct first impressions by going at a crawl. Then, as they reached the suburbs, he put on the pace.

"Oh!" said Mary. "Ugh!" said the squire. Earth seemed to come rushing at them with intent to do grievous bodily harm, but only to get tossed into the background for its pains, as so much refuse of picturesque wonder. Its villages, turrets, steeples, and wayfaring folk were whirling, whirling, whirling past, from an infinite of things that endure forever, to an infinite of things that were. The lazy teams seemed as trotters trying to break the record. The very policemen on point duty were in the movement. It was cosmic motion realized to sense, and for the first time. With the best of railway-cars the vault of heaven is not in the race. Even a gallop was out of the comparison. One had to work too much in partnership with the horse for the sense of pure effortless cleavage of the air. The motor-car is perhaps a godsend for those of us who are too deep-rooted in the idea of the stability of things. It is a vastly more exhilarating suggestion of the earth's dance than the pendulum and the sanded floor.

For the gray-haired senior it marked an end of the old leisurely picturesque of travel, and brought in a new one of landscape by lime-light flash. Soon they were in Buckinghamshire, that second garden of England; in its dignified lenity of tone, a proof after Woollett touched into color and life. Venerable Aylesbury, which he knew, as matter of historic evi-

dence, had endured for centuries, passed him, in an instant, out of nothingness back into it again. Spires that might have been Oxford seen from Bicester glared at him for a moment, and then hurried by to the common doom. For the first fifteen minutes of it he was sulky; in the second he began to feel that he would lower the fines in cases of this description before the bench; at the third he beamed like a happy child. All his troubles, including Kisbye, had gone to limbo with hamlet and town, the rushing wind of things carrying freshness and healing to the innermost nerves of the brain. Hurrah for the latest life of the road! When will the doctors codify it into a treatment for half the worries of our lot?

Mary dared not confess to herself the ecstasy she felt. She looked wistful with delight. Poor child! she was at the budding age when we begin to realize the fullness and the glory of the inheritance of sensation into which we have been born. Yet she had her doubts, inspired, perhaps, by ascetic teachings of Mr. Bascomb entirely foreign to her nature. Was it right to feel so intensely alive? She dreaded this arrow-flight through space, as sometimes she dreaded the very organ-peals and the quired hymns, lest they should carry her to heights of presumption that might, one day, measure only depths of spiritual fall. Was not this rapture of physical being something to be watched and curbed before it made her the bond-slave of sense? It might be rash to feel such mastery over things in such a world.

"Too much pace for you?" inquired Mr. Gooding,

considerately. He knew that he was going too fast and that he owed amends to the outraged law. He was a sure hand; it is impossible to make a better excuse for him. He steered for a fine, as others sometimes ride for a fall. He simply could not resist the temptation of giving her a happy scare.

"No; only too much 'don't care.'" And with quick, impulsive finger she checked his make-believe attempt to slacken down.

"Sorry to be alive, perhaps?" he asked, his twinkling eye still set straight ahead.

"No; only sorry not to be sorry. I—" The wind caught the rest.

Thereafter she scarcely spoke; but the deepened pink of her exquisite complexion, the fire of her glance, made words a superfluity. The run was, in the main, a mere interjectional transaction from first to last. Another benefit of this matchless invention is that it tends to prove the futility of utterance.

For this reason it precludes even expostulation on the part of the justly scandalized wayfarer. As the terror threatens him at short notice, he naturally postpones the assertion of his rights under the Highways Act until he has reached cover. When he has reached it the terror is out of range, and reproof would be a waste of words. There can be no impressiveness in mere fag-ends of objurgation struggling in the teeth of a hostile wind. The very barn-door fowls see the folly of protest. They hold out longer than their superiors, and the lord of the harem preserves the majesty of his strut until the thing

is almost upon him. Then, with a screech which is still but horror, he signals the *sauve qui peut,* supplementing an all too lingering hop with a flutter that costs him some of the glories of his tail. If a reproach comes afterward, it is only in the form of a quavering screech of remonstrance, as from man to man, against the brutality—to say nothing of the fatuous want of respect for a common interest of domestic supremacy—that lowers him in the eyes of his womankind.

At Stratford-on-Avon father and daughter had perforce to alight to catch a cross-country train for Liddicot. The squire was profuse in thanks. Mary simply pressed the young fellow's hand, and murmured, "So soon!" It was, in substance, a prayer to Apollo for one more lift in the chariot of the sun.

XXVI

MR. GOODING himself had to stop for a fresh supply of oil and for some needful adjustments that promised to detain him for half an hour. It was against his will. He had come, not exactly to see middle England in a day, but only to survey what he hoped to see, later on, in a month or a year. It was but a mode of looking at the map. He wanted the lie of the land in actual vision, as he already had it in his reading wide and deep. And, for that matter, no length of time could fully serve here. The church, the winding river, the ancient bridge, the broad, bland land, which a thunder-storm will touch with terror and a burst of sunshine recover to hope and joy—what are they but hints of a secret of the all-sufficiency of genius that none of us will ever fathom? Out of this, without further aid from nature, came the cave of *Cymbeline,* perhaps, the beetling rock of *Lear;* for Dover cliff is but a legend —the fairy wood of the "Dream." The rest is pure chemistry of the brain, or perhaps, as they fable it, some earlier soul-birth with the universe for its range.

Yet some is still here to-day, as, for those who

know how to see it, it was three centuries ago. The wench *Audrey,* a mere speck of white in the deepening twilight, still heads homeward the lumbering kine. The patient creatures, the horned impact of which, in rage, might be measured by a very respectable figure in tons, groan with anguish because a slip of a girl bars their passage with a twig; and matter owns its allegiance even to this humblest manifestation of mind. A fellow at road-making, who touched his hat vaguely, as though to propitiate mankind at large, was *Costard* fallen on less cheerful days. Another, in the modern blue of his office, who solemnly demanded Mr. Gooding's name and address, though the vehicle was then demurely traveling at a pace within the act, was not far to seek.

"Fancy I could name you without asking," was the reply. "You are Constable Dull of blessed memory, and you serve Ferdinand, King of Navarre."

"Young joker," returned the officer, "none of your lip."

Unchangeable England! Nowhere, except of course in Navarre, is the policeman so much the mere monitor of the evil-doer, looking down on him, indeed, from cerulean heights, yet still ready to admit that he, too, once trod earth and its miry ways. This one drew no sword, flourished no truncheon. He simply made an entry in his note-book, and resumed his round.

On and forever onward! A rush of eight miles by a perfect road: a mighty fortress with foundations in the solid rock, a wide, wide stretch of battlement

and tower, shining plate-glass, port-holes that are mere mysteries of shade, and a huge flag that now only dominates a landscape where it once dominated a land—Warwick. The rush continued for five miles more, and other towers, red in the sun for all the waste of years, and as wide in their sweep as the circuit of a walled city—Kenilworth. About as far again, and then three spires on the sky-line, and thrice three times as many factory chimneys—Coventry. Old gabled houses here, flanked by new emporiums; tramways in the winding streets of the "ride"; above them telegraph wires from which a second Peeping Tom might flash his secret to the uttermost ends of the earth in time for the evening editions. England still, the past and the present inextricable—at once a patchwork and a growth. Creeping disentanglement for the machine, then another rush, and a smear that means a mining village. Compensation at hand in George Eliot's country. A dip in the road—Griff, the home, snug in its hollow, and lovely still. A rise, and the turning to castellated Arbury, the Cheverel Manor of "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story." Chilvers Coton (Shepperton) beyond, and then Nuneaton (Milby or nothing), the girlhood's haunt. Clear of all that, after a good run, the Ashby-de-la-Zouch of Mary Stuart's captivity, and of "Ivanhoe." Next, the Derby of Celt and Roman, Saxon and Dane, of the Pretender's march, and Heaven and history only know what beside. Mr. Gooding is able to give full fifteen minutes to its memories, for the machine calls a halt for more

fuel. It is hardly enough for the depth and breadth of it in dateless time. Roads that the legions once trod, especially the legion recruited in Spain, with many a brown cheek and flashing eye in the surviving peasantry to tell the tale. Ipstones hard by, with its townsfolk, British to this day in every essential of race type for soul and body—keen eyes, black hair, manner that is all nerves: some tribe that escaped exterminating conquest—the Corvi, perhaps—by the accident of a river full of ravines, roads all tracks and byways, a sort of British Transvaal. The Corvi keep shop there now, immune from the tourist as from the Roman, but ready, behind their counters, to make the modern invader pay for all.

A long swerve to the right,—rather a blunder of Mr. Gooding's,—and Ollerton as a starting-point for the dukeries. You may cover them with a hat, though it must be a Quaker's of the old school. The agent's house, castellated, if you please, to mark his state, a placid stream banked with dense trees, bushes, and osiers, and exquisite in its windings of luminous shade. Then Thoresby Park, a dukery, though now the seat of an earldom; and in the distance the manor, a mass of modern masonry seen through the glass, but softened by the blue haze into perfect keeping with the sylvan scenery. Workmen's houses a picture, like everything else on the estate—Arcadia in a ring-fence. Up hill and down dale, the road stretching to the horizon; but courage! and presently—Clumber. Magnificent glades of

woodland, deer, red (and proud of it), bracken to your waist. In a clearing an old inn, with its sign the arms of the "family," "Loyauté n'a honte," as Mr. Gooding makes it out in the rush, and the ribbon of the Garter conspicuous in the decorative scheme. Hard by, one of the gates of the estate, and presently the house, seen through an opening in the deep woods —Italian in the general scheme, and a mere thing of yesterday, being less than a century and a half old. Then the great gate, with a long, long avenue of limes as exquisitely trimmed as anything at Allonby. Out of the park again, by another gate of weather-stained stone, and now the road to Welbeck. Lodges, the trailing growths of which might earn for England a subtitle of the Flowery Land, but little life of man or beast here or anywhere else. Now and then a laborer; now and then a game-keeping giant, white-bearded, perhaps, and red-nosed, each effect ever keeping pace with the other in intensity. But the men are rare, the villages rarer still. It is yet an unpeopled land, with scores of square miles waiting for effective settlement, vast wastes of beauty in virgin forest or cultivated park. Welbeck at last, an ordered scheme of grandeur like the rest, massive, endless, and finally burrowing underground in architectural caves of Kentucky, as wondrous as anything above. The whole region, like distant Allonby itself, manifestly a government within a government, with England lying outside.

To Worksop Manor now, a dukery still by courtesy, as having once been the seat of a duke. Thence,

quitting the charmed circle, a long run for Chatsworth imperative for Mr. Gooding, though his machine begins to pant for rest. But he calls on it, and it answers, and whirls him to new scenes, one of them a lurid city of Dis, on the edge of the coal region, turreted with chimneys belching fire in the broad day, its river of hot water from the works steaming to the sky. Unwashed gangs on the roads, day-shifts going home, after relief by night-shifts, as yet shining from soap and towel, who are deep, deep under the soil—a perpetual motion of labor to feed the mighty estate above. It is a ducal colliery, and its grime is soon effaced by the beauties of the valley that lead to the last great house on the list. Wild moors, grim gorges, hill-slopes of purple heather, with patches of grass showing through, and of gray primeval stone polled with undying mosses; beetling rocks with wooded summits; streams crossed by rustic bridges, and with villages to match—in one word, every imaginable beauty of hill and dale to atone for the valley of doom we have just left. A wayside inn now, with a "Devonshire Arms" to warn us in whose country we are. Then the park, a calm as of Eden, and more red deer, facing round at the new enemy of sylvan peace to cover the flight of their hinds. Chatsworth at last, the great house seen through an opening in the immense circuit of leafage by which it is screened, and with a river flowing in its front. No time to pause now for the belated traveler; but he well knows what lies beyond. A place that starts fair with a mention in Doomsday,

and a product of all the centuries since in planning, building, collecting for art and luxury and the pride of life. Building and rebuilding. Tower added to tower, and hall to hall, age by age. Wren one of its architects; the Scottish queen one of its prisoners. In happier times a school of landscape-gardening surpassing the inventions of Eastern fable. A cloying mass of wonders in which a man not to the manner born of the best in life might hardly hope to sleep a wink for the throbbing sense of the wonders of his lot.

But there is no time to linger. Daylight is beginning to wane, and miles yet lie between the traveler and the place to which he has telegraphed for rooms. So, doubling on his route again, he makes for supper and bed at the same pace as before, with only his blazing lamps and the guide-posts to show the way. They are hardly enough for a man who does not know it already. The gloom deepens; the very milestones are now mute; the great silence begins, and a void of miles of country without a single wayfarer. To make matters worse, the machine strikes work, and for a full hour its driver fusses and fumes over it without result. It moves again at last, but slowly, and as though only under his own compulsion of want of rest and refreshment.

And then a new trouble. A certain sickening softness in the sense of motion warns Mr. Gooding that he has left the road. He alights in haste, to find himself on turf, and in a leafy lane, with a timbered glade beyond that may be the entrance to an en-

chanted wood. He has clean lost his road, and, by way of a call for guidance, he tries a blast on his bugle-horn, now hoarser than ever with the labors of the journey, and instinctively raises the wild war-whoop of his college cry. This wholly new sensation for Sherwood Forest wins sympathetic, though hardly helpful, notice from the rabbits in frantic scamper across the line of light. A second and a third summons have but the same fortune; but a final effort is answered by a shout in the distance, and a responsive light from the blackness of the forest belt. At closer quarters it is the wild figure of a man past middle age, waving a lantern from the tail-board of a covered vehicle.

"Where am I?"

"In Sherwood Forest."

"Robin Hood's country?"

"Where else, if you expect an answer to the bugle-horn?"

"The way to Edwinstowe, if you please."

"No guiding you that gate within an hour of midnight; but you may come up here, if you don't mind roughing it."

"Where?"

"In the yellow van."

XXVII

CONVERSATIONAL preliminaries are naturally brief when one has the appetite of an ogre. In a very few minutes Mr. Gooding was at work on the squarest meal the van could afford, with his host complacently looking on.

It was not a bad meal. The little larder produced pressed beef and pickles, a slice of tongue, a loaf of brown bread, a bottle of stout. A lamp threw a roof ray on host and guest. The van stood in deep shadow. Seen from the distance, they would have looked well—a bit of the void of darkness redeemed to comfort and light.

It was another lecturer this time. Three-score and five was about his age. His high cheek-bones, roundish head, keen glances flashing through the mere slits of his eyes, even the crisp, curling hair, were all so many signs of one about equally ready for the word and the blow. No fear of the latter just now. He was evidently in his most expansive mood as he watched his guest.

"Redmond 's my name, if anybody wants to know it. 'Jack Redmond'—'Old Redmond.'"

"My card by and by," returned the wayfarer, helping himself to another slice of beef.

"You 're my sort," said the host. "Don't spare it, though it 's a fellow-citizen o' yours. So 's the tongue, for that matter, and the peaches that 's coming next. We 've left off learning how to feed ourselves in this country. All fellow-citizens."

It was some minutes before Mr. Gooding's answer came:

"How do you know about fellow-citizens?"

"You 're so careful in sounding your words."

"Now I 'll push on," said Mr. Gooding, as he rose to fill his pipe.

"Could n't think of it; you 'd never find the way, and I 'm too tired to show you. Stay to oblige me; and I 'll stand a drop of something short."

Arthur looked round.

"Oh, we 've got a spare bedroom," said the other, proudly, "and I 'll fix you up in a twinkling, if you 'll bring your rug inside."

"Done," laughed Mr. Gooding, without further ado. And he went out and made the machine comfortable under a light cloth.

"Sleepy?" inquired Redmond.

"Never a bit. I could go on all night now—talking, motoring, anything you like."

"Make it talking. I have n't exchanged a blessed word with anybody all day long."

"The van 's an old acquaintance. Never saw you before."

"No; I 'm not the regular man. T' other 's ill. Labor o' love with me, but sometimes I pine for company. I thought you might be a happy beggar-

man on tramp, and we 'd have a rouse to pass the hours."

"Sorry to disappoint."

"You 'll do as well, far 's I can judge. They 're good company, though, the roadside men. Lord! what they see and say nothin' about! It 'u'd fill a book. But you 've got to know where to find 'em. Wager I 'd lay my hand on two or three in a cave by the roadside not so far from here. All snug, and always a box of matches, and sometimes a bit o' victual left for the next man. And the 'county constab,' if you please, none the wiser. Ah, it 's a fine life in the summer-time."

The pipes were well alight by this time, and the drop of something short had long been on the board. Arthur pulled quietly and felt good. The trees, with the light breeze stirring in their branches, were evidently in the same mood. The rest was silence, as though all living things were stilled by terror of the lamp.

"Sherwood Forest, I think you said," murmured the young man, dreamily.

The old one was in no hurry to reply. Hurry was manifestly out of the question in such environment.

"'Hey, jolly Robin!'"

he observed at length.

"'Hoe, jolly Robin!
Hey, jolly Robin Hood!'"

returned Mr. Gooding, with much solemnity.

"Good boy! D'ye know it, too?" cried the other,

jumping up to pluck a pocket edition of the "Ballads" from the library shelf.

"Why not?" said Gooding.

"Will ye cap verses?" said the other, with growing excitement. "To think of it—and you all the way from the other side!"

"Why not?" said the other, again. "I, too, have sat at good men's feasts."

"Only to think of it! It 's my Bible I 'm handling now—Robin, who stood up for all the weak things of life against the strong things! A strong man on the right side."

"'All wemen wershep he,'"

said the guest.

"Your hand again," said the host, "wherever you come from.

'He was a good out lawe
And dyde pore men much god.'

The poor against the rich, the laborer against the lord.

'But loke ye do no housebonde harm
That tylleth with his plough.'

Robin, the first that struck for us after the long night. The whole burden of it a protest against the cruel forest laws, a part of the land laws that have left bonny England where it is to-day. Cap, cap, and be hanged to ye! It 's my happy night!"

"'Hey, jolly Robin!'"

said Mr. Gooding, again.

"Right again, youngster. That 's the spirit of it. *Jolly* Robin. Grin and ply your cudgel. Keep a

good heart. I can't do that. I waste myself in rages. T' other one was a hero. I am but as I am."

"Yet you 're camped in the greenwood?

'There he herde the notés small
Of byrdes mery syngynge.' "

"Aye, but you 're a crony, and no mistake!" cried his admiring senior. "Just one drop more?"

"Thank you. My favorite tipple is fresh air, if you don't mind."

"It 's all in Robin—Shakspere's mate, and a greater, for he sang in deeds. You 'll find everything in that little book. He was a wise leech, with his finger on the pulse of the world. Look at him turning butcher, and breaking the trust with their own tool of a cutting price.

'For he sold more meat for one peny
Than others could do for three.'

A frolic, and the fun on the side of the hungry man. Ah, it was a merrier England when the nobodies had the last laugh. Most of it 's sheer allegory, if you know how to take it. The fight with the giants—nothing of the sort: a fight with the monopolists. And when the biggest comes down:

'So from his shoulders he 's cut his head,
Which on the ground did fall,
And grumbling sore at Robin Hood,
To be so dealt withal.'

Is n't it just like 'em—never satisfied?"

"Seems a little exaggerated," said Mr. Gooding.

"Well, well, well, well! Grant me a miracle or two for my Scripture(since you 'd claim it for yours.

Suppose his full range at the butts was not exactly the measured mile, as they say it was."

"Oh, that 's all right. They give it as a story of the longbow."

"Anyhow, he shot on our side, and we want another champion. Who 'll stand up for us now? As fast as 'the million' make the money the millionaire fobs it. Does it every time. Just a turn of the hand like the spot stroke. Lord, will it ever be barred! I sometimes wonder how it 's all going to end."

"Don't worry," said Mr. Gooding, knocking out his ashes for a refill.

"Which is as much as to say, 'Trust in Providence'? You may be right. P'r'ps it is n't a matter for champions, and it 'll settle itself, in the long run, by getting worse so that it may get better. It 's a growth, and we must give it its chance. Let it work itself to a flower, poisonous or other, and then it 'll rot of its own accord. Dollar-hunting, land-grabbing its own cure—p'r'aps that 's the hope. It can't last forever. They 're getting sick—sick of their own dismal trade.

"Beautiful story, that, of one of the mightiest of your Yankee hunters—did you ever strike it? When he 'd made more than he knew what to do with, he tried to unload a little, just to get breath, in a kind of grand tour. Special cars and state-rooms all the way along; special teams to whirl him about in Europe; special guides, couriers, interpreters—the devil knows what. At last they got him to Amsterdam, and tried to show him the pictures. He stood

it for half an hour, then slipped out to the Stock Exchange, and made fifty thousand in half an hour more."

"Manifest destiny," said Mr. Gooding.

"No; only secret itch. A case for the doctors, believe me. We shall live to see 'em at one another's throats, and then mankind will come into its own again. Ever noticed the gnawing envy in the eye of Five Million when he feels that Six Million looks on him like 'dirt'—the hangdog shame of him? Can't abear to be in the same room with his betters in the infernal trade. The gradations of it! Five Million a derision to Six, and a loathing to Four, and so on till you reach the things that live in the mud. I stood outside a fashionable restaurant the other day, and watched two men in the street peering through the crimson curtains at a party picking their dainty way through a five-pound meal. Give you my word, I thought one of 'em would have fallen down and worshiped. However, to be fair, t' other blasphemed."

"They 'll get that dinner and the whole earth soon as they are fit for it," said Mr. Gooding, "but not a moment before. Tell 'em to hurry up over their beer. That 's the meaning of America."

"Oh," groaned the old man, "we all thought so once. But is there a more self-consciously degraded thing in all creation than the American poor man? I 've been there and marked his pariah shuffle and his downcast eye."

"Give your coffee time to settle. You seem to have been about a bit."

"Everywhere, specially on your side—Pacific slope before you were born, islands, Australia. Lord, Lord, it 's a big dot of a world!"

"And all built on pretty much the same plan, eh?" said Mr. Gooding.

"That 's so; devil take the hindmost; and 'How soon can I get out of it?' about the wisest thought you can start with when you 're born. Really, the burial club seems to be the only reasonable institution. And it might be such a happy family!"

"Give us a song," said Mr. Gooding.

"What 'll you have—'England 's Going Down the Hill'? Heard it from a gutter in a slum, sung by the composer."

"It 's such a fine night," pleaded the guest.

And such a night it was. The glades, where buskined Marian might have walked, stretched in every direction under a sky luminous with stars. One avenue seemed to end in a kind of amphitheater, a conceivable council-place of the outlaw band. And here and there was a great swarth of shade for hiding, and still, no doubt, a shelter for all the tremulous life of the forest, bending ten thousand thousand pairs of eyes on the glare of light from the van.

"As you please," said Redmond. "And what 's your news?"

"Oh, just the heart of England in a lightning-flash. It 's that or nothing for the tourist."

"For the American tourist."

"Even for the stars themselves, I should say.

They can't see much of us, with the ball in flight."

"S'pose that 's why they never interfere. And what do you think of it?"

"Pretty sight."

"Bah! You holiday people don't know how to look at a landscape. You miss all the devilment of it. If only you did know! You 'd see the villages in all their little infamies under their greasy smile. Mother Shipton's, the secret-boozing ken; and Mother Quickly's, that 's worse. They 're not even good in their stagnation—only goody at the best. How can you wonder? They 've got so little for idle hands to do. And so—well, just like their betters, for that matter, and for the same reason. It is n't the towns that corrupt them. They corrupt the towns, taking their wickedness and their poverty and their fecklessness up to market, because the energies behind them can find no healthy outlet at home in profitable toil. A fine price we have to pay for your hothouse 'Beauties of England and Wales,' with all the country-side driven by a kind of monster conscription into the army of the slums. We 're worth something better than to make a holiday for Americans."

He dropped his bantering tone, and flashed out passionately:

"Look at me, ruined by farming; and I 've toiled like a slave all my life. Who killed Cock Robin? Shall I tell you? The English land system. Here am I to-day to show that the man who farms straight and farms honest can't hope to make a living out of

it while idle ownership claims such a huge share of his labor. We are being beat by the foreigner who works for himself on his own patch. You can't keep all this wicked luxury of landlord, aye, and gentleman farmer, too, out of one pair of laborer's hands. But if you won't try, there 's always plenty that will, in the struggle for a crust. Have it or leave it; and if you don't like it, off with you to the main sewer of London town. You can't live and thrive, increase and multiply, here without the good leave of your betters; and they won't give you leave. They want the land for a pleasure-ground; they can get their incomes somewhere else. Rural England is starved for lack of an opening. Blank stagnation everywhere, and kept so by word of command. Try to do something to make a man of yourself, and see how soon they 'll shunt you out of the place. Why do your cities in America spring up in a night and a day from log huts? Because every man 's free to do his best. There is n't a hamlet in England but 's hag-ridden by some 'noble house.' That 's what your historian Motley meant when he talked of the fearful price paid by the English people for the parks, castles, fisheries, and fox-huntings of its 'splendid aristocracy.'

"But there," he added, with a bitter laugh at his own expense, "what 's the use of talking? I 'd say pass the bottle, and forget it all, if I was a man of that sort. The little van that goes up and down to testify against it takes itself seriously enough; but that 's only its foolishness. The feudal system don't

mind. And feudal system it is, alive and kicking as fresh as ever in this our latest growth of time. For the essence of the accursed thing is that one man 's the property of another, and that his first care on coming into his manhood is to find some fellow-creature to kneel to, and, laying hand in hand, say, 'Please take possession of me.' The old system went from man to man until it reached the highest. It 's perfect to-day as between peasant and farmer, farmer and lord; but there 's sometimes a break when the noble owner himself belongs to a money-lender or to a queen of the music-halls.

"And now, youngster, let 's turn in. I 'm tired, and you must be sleepy after this rigmarole. I 'll put the supper-things outside, and attend to 'em in the morning. Would you mind giving me a lift with the linen-chest? Thanks. There 's your bed on the lid, if you 'll take out the big mattress. I 'll fix myself up on the other in my old soldier's cloak. Draw the curtain, and there 's your spare room. Mind your head, please, against the library shelves, and don't go into the crockery when you 're taking off your coat."

"The cloak for me," said Mr. Gooding. "I must turn out early to make it up with the machine."

"Well, every man to his taste. Good night, and pleasant dreams"; and almost as the words left his lips he was fast asleep.

Next morning a kindly hand on his shoulder roused the young man to sunrise and all the glories of Sherwood.

His toilet was deferred, but it took a full hour to valet the car. The creature was sulky at first, and seemed to have developed a mechanical spavin with the hard work of the day before. Fortunately, there was a good reserve of fuel.

All was right at last, and then Redmond, giving his guest a send-off from the turf with his shoulder, put him square to his work on the highroad.

"Good-by; good luck."

So they parted, and the young man was soon bowling along toward bath and breakfast, in the forest hotel which he had missed in his wanderings the night before. A telegram awaited him: "Want you." It was signed "Augusta," and of course it brought his wanderings to a close.

XXVIII



N receipt of Augusta's message Arthur Gooding made straight for Allonby. A certain note of imperiousness in it had the double charm of the elder sister and of the woman. Though there was so little difference in years between them, it carried him back to the time where hers was the protecting arm and the guiding brain.

He found her troubled, and yet with a certain radiancy as of hope and certainty.

"Arthur, I want you to find a ring in the Red Sea —two rings."

"One chance more for me."

"You 've heard me speak of the Herions."

"I know all about them."

"Why, you never saw them in your l—"

"Never saw Alexander the Great, if it comes to that."

"Don't be absurd, Arthur. Well, they are lost in town, and I want them back at Allonby—right here."

"A slumming job."

"Just to please little-big sister. I don't think you are quite so attentive as ever."

"Why?"

"You have n't started yet."

"I ought to be. You are quite as unreasonable."

"I 'll get Mary to ask you."

"Don't be absurd, Augusta. Do you happen to know the time of the next train?"

It was a large order, and he felt as much as the express flew townward with a steady recurrent beat of movement that made him feel like Sindbad under the roc's wing. How shall the lost be found in mighty London, the home of the vanishing-trick? He steamed into the great station as the local trains were steaming out with their freight of business men homeward bound. The city fills and empties every day, from its suburbs back to the suburbs again. The return is a rush as of the river at Dinan, roaring home in flood fast enough to drown the urchins picking the pebbles from its bed. And any two of these obscure wayfarers might be Rose and George.

Next morning it was, Where to begin? All he had to guide him was the returned envelop that bore the address of their last-known lodging, with its indorsement of "gone away." So he made that quarter his starting-point. It was a strange neighborhood, exquisitely dismal in its newer parts, as exquisitely flavored with tender and fragrant memories in its many remains of the past. Here yet stands the church that marks, though in a modern casing, the site of Chaucer's "Scole of Stratford atte Bowe"—one of its ancient tombs within that of a child who owed heaven to the kindness wherewith

"Nature his nurse gott him to bed betimes." And hard by, a Board school, naked and unashamed, stands where stood, not too long ago for some of us to have passed our childhood there, an old hunting-lodge of the first James, majestic in its gables and its paneled glories, its finely ceiled state-rooms, its deep-bayed hearths, sacred to the gods of the fireside. Surely a pick in the hands of a vestryman may be the deadliest of murderers' tools.

The lodging was in one of the mean streets that have usurped the site of the old-time garden. The landlady, a Megæra from the wash-tub, received Mr. Gooding's inquiries with a look of mingled suspicion, respect, indifference, all in one glassy, non-committal stare.

"Herion," said the young man, repeating his first mention of the name.

"'Erring, 'Erring?" she mused.

"Why, certainly, if you wish it."

"A young feller, fine figger of a man, like, an' wife to match? Sort of country couple?"

"That 's it."

"Owe me thirteen shillin's rent."

"I 'll pay it."

She held out her hand at once, and, on the completion of the transaction, said in a really obliging manner: "Well, they don't live here."

"Ah, don't tell me too much at once."

"You see, they went on all right till he lost his job at the docks; an' then, you see, they fell be'ind-'and with their rent. An', of course, I could n't—"

"You 're a pansy. But what 's become of them?"

"Could n't tell yer, guvnor."

"Switch me on to somebody that can."

"Well, there was a man from the country as knew 'em—porter at a ware'us in the Borough—name of Jubb."

"The warehouse or the porter?"

"I could n't say."

Jubb was found, and he proved to be the owner of the shop. And, in due course, his porter was run to earth for more leisurely examination in his own home.

The porter was communicative, but hardly helpful. He and his wife were two grains of the human rubbish which the feudal system dumps into the towns. By good hap they had fallen in a cranny of the stony places where, after a fashion, they might take root. He was quiet in manner, as one awe-struck with his luck, yet perplexed with yearnings for the old village home. The inquirer had to endure much from him in the way of reminiscence, in the hope of getting the one thing needful at last.

"Fust I see o' London in all my life I come up for a 'oliday. Frightened of it like when I got there, an' trots into a pub to ask my way. Stops in the pub all day, an' goes back at night, same way 's I come. I 'ad n't seen much, but, mind yer, I got 'ome to time."

It was his first experience in dissipation, but it sufficed.

"I ain't seen much more of it now, master, though I 've been up this five year. But I 've got a place, an' that 'll do for me. I loads an' unloads my 'taters all day long, an' then, when I 've swep' out the ware'us, I comes 'ome and 'as my tea."

He expected no more. His life in the village had been one long apprenticeship to the living death. Full many a winter's night had he tramped home in the darkness through miry ways to a mildewed cottage lighted by a farthing dip, and to a supper of bread-crusts soaked in liquid grease, offered and eaten in the silence of a life without events. What was there to talk about? Nothing had happened, nothing was going to happen. The muteness of his mate betokened no ill feeling, but only stagnation of the mind. And sometimes, to break the silence, there was the half-delirious wail of a child down with one of the diseases of its age. To-day was as yesterday; to-morrow would be as to-day. The sweet privacies of dawn to the early riser, so restful to the tormented spirit, were but aggravations of the melancholy of his lot. It was not sorrow, but the far worse thing—absence of joy: a life wherein nothing came to pass but a rank pipe. This it is, the sense of the vacuity of being, that empties the cottage into the slum. The gin-palace is at least a present discount of the promises; and the clodhopper has almost ceased to believe in the brightness of a life to come, for want of a sign.

He had resisted that consolation, for he had not enough temperament for vice. Town was as dull as country for him. Yet he lived by a doctrine, as all must, though they may not be able to give it a name. It was the doctrine of the futility of resistance to the hurtful forces of the world.

"We keeps ourselves to ourselves," he said to Mr. Gooding, by way of apology for his ignorance of the further movements of the Herions. "We don't say nothin' to nobody: you gets on best that way. I never see any one come to much good as did. The gentry doan' like it. All the noise they want they can make for theirselves. Keep quiet—eh, master?—an' then you won't find the churchyard so much of a change. It 's the lively ones that finds dying such a worry. I fancy that was young Herion's complaint, from all I 've heared."

"I dare say; but how are we going to cure him, if you can't put me on his track?"

The wife wrinkled her brow in thought. "There was a woman—a sort of a woman—as 'elped her at the birth of her baby. So I was told. It came on sudden-like, soon after they went away."

"Don't you fancy I 'm in a hurry," said Arthur, settling himself. "If it comes to a pinch, I 've got all night long."

"Mrs. Patch was her name—if she was a Mrs."

"Hurry up a bit, just for fun," said the youth.

"She lived at a place called Batley's Rents in Limehouse. So I was told."

"Thank you. I 'm sure you 're always among

those present," he said, pressing half a crown into her hand.

"GONE 'opping," was the report in the Rents; but the scent was now so hot that Batley's, with scarcely an effort, was enabled to name the village in Kent where Mrs. Patch might not inconceivably be found.

XXIX



HAT same night, such is the perfection of the railway system and such are the vicissitudes of a quest, Mr. Gooding was sitting by a camp-fire in Kent. His companions were a gang of hop-pickers who had finished their day's work and were prolonging their evening revel into the small hours.

It was a motley throng—outcasts of town and country, and a few quite decent folk who took their hopping as a recreation and killed the two birds of work and the summer holiday with one stone.

The "sort of a woman" he had come in quest of was among them. She sat a little apart from the rest, pulling at a pipe with tranquil energy, and gazing into vacancy. The glow of the fire lighted up her dismal, tormented face of early middle age, seamed with the coarser cares. She was a drab, even in the punning sense of the word, being of a dry-mud color in her very clothing, as though she had quite immediately sprung from the soil, and might dissolve back into it at any moment by the accident of a shower. She was shod only less solidly than a horse, and mainly with metal, too, which glittered bright in nail and clamp from the surface of her up-

turned soles. She seemed as densely unideaed as a frog at rest—a peasant woman of the lowest order, who had received her final touch of brutishness in town. The gang girls of the fen country look so when their womanhood has flowered in the squalor of a provincial center. In such the earth seems hungry to claim its own before the time. A too exclusive commerce with it has degraded them to the lowest level. They seem to gape wonder at everything in the cosmic scheme that is not a clod. Arthur thought of his sister, and wondered whether the evolutionary system might not possibly be brought under new management for the speedier elevation of the race. It might otherwise take thousands of years to give Mrs. Patch a lift toward the skies.

She grunted forth her answers in one syllable till Mr. Gooding mollified her with a tip. Then she went into two, though but a little way. "Yes; I knowed 'er, fast enough." The neatness of her questioner's attire seemed to have some effect upon her, as upon all of them. They settled down to make the most of the unwonted visit of a "gentleman," eyeing him the while with contemptuous wonder, as *Hotspur* might have eyed his fop.

The arrival of Mrs. Patch's "man" with a can of beer was a welcome diversion. He was an absolute contrast to her—small, foxy, nimble, voluble, but still chary of speech at first, as though to make the most of his information. For her his coming was evidently a relief to the tedium of talk, and she resumed her silence and her pipe.

"Yes; we knowed 'em, fast enough," he repeated. "You 're at the right shop here, guvnor."

"Where are they now?"

"Well, we 'll come to that by an' by. I was in the same gang with 'im, this 'ere friend o' yours, at Lime'us Dock. Garge, we used to call 'im. I can see 'im as well as I see you—a reg'lar glutton for work."

"Yes, yes."

"Then we both got the sack,—the work comes an' goes, guvnor,—an' I loses sight on 'im for a time. To tell you the truth, they was both rather a cut above me an' my missus. But you know how it is—hard up, an' the kid comin'. People can't afford to be partic'lar when they 're like that. Can they, now?"

"You 're giving us rather too much hot air," said Mr. Gooding.

"Then I struck 'im again, guvnor. An' where d'ye think it was? But there—you 'd never guess."

"Then I won't try."

"Well, he was jest mad for a job. An' what—do—you—think he was doin', sir? Gospel truth!"

"Governor of the Bank of England?"

"No, sir; but jest outside it, peddlin' knickknacks on the curb—studs, pocket-combs, toothpicks, 'all this lot a penny.' Seem he 'd once been in that line. That 's the way English-born men has to live nowadays, guvnor, if they 're not foreigners. An' even that lot is cuttin' into the street trade."

"Sorry, but—" It was maddening.

"Things 'll never be right," piped another of the group, "till them sort is kep' out of this country. I 'm a snip, an' I know what they are in my trade. Talk about religion!"

"I 'm not talking about it," said Mr. Gooding.

"Well, if you was, you 'd see as God A'mighty seems to think more o' the Jarmans than he does of his own countrymen."

"An' dynamite on your door-step as soon as look at ye, if you put 'em out!" said a decent-looking woman, comfortably shawled.

"Ever 'ad any on yours, missus?" some one asked.

It turned the laugh against her, and spoiled her effect. There was evidently a sneaking kindness for this agency with most of them. Nobody approved, but nobody blamed. It was left a moot point.

"As to that," returned the tailor, "there 's a good deal to be said on both sides. Dynamiters ain't all bad. They mean well, some of 'em. It 's the swells they 're after most o' the time; it ain't us lot."

A chill fell on the group. The woman in the shawl had a repentant air.

"You see, Englishmen likes to enjoy theirselves," said the foxy little man, by way of diversion. "That 's their natur'. 'Jolly Englishmen!'—you 've heared the sayin'. This foreign scum they don't want no enjoyment. Live on pickles,—seen it with my own eyes,—an' sleep on the same shelf as they keep the jar. That 's their touch. They don't want no music-'alls in the evenin', an' no social glass—

jest as we might be 'avin' now. That 's what fust brought me up to town—the lights in the street."

"It ain't the foreigners," said the tailor; "it 's the rich people, no matter where they come from. All the coin o' the world drains into their pockets. If you want sights, go round the West End. That 's the way the money goes. Ever done Bond street, mate, on a fine evenin'?"

"No; not my touch."

"The pantymines ain't in it for glory. Every winder ablaze; the very coffee-shops like Aladdin's palace, an' gals in long trains to wait. When I got nothin' else to do, I watch it from outside. An' the jewel-shops, with the glare of it beatin' down on the goods till it stings 'em into burnin' life—throb, throb, throb! An' the blasted knickknacks! None o' your 'this lot a penny' there. Cases in solid gold to hold a ha'p'orth o' lead-pencil; penholders likewise; even the very pens. My Gawd, it 's cruel! They dunno what to do with the coin. They say the Jarmans is comin' over 'ere to give us a good 'idin' one o' these days. It 'll serve us damned well right."

Arthur was sick at heart. He was baffled in his quest. Either they knew nothing or they would not tell. And the misery chilled him. He had such a sense of opportunity in life—opportunity for all; and the instinctive pessimism of these wretches seemed to give it the lie. He had dreams of being a great financier, of world-girdling combinations in which his own aggrandizement would be that of the race. Yet these people were some of the items of

his reckoning. What, after all, could he, or his tribe, do for any but themselves? Was this the result of ages of profit-hunting, on the principle that the good of one was the good of all? He had crossed the Atlantic with hopes of a venture which was to determine his choice of a career. Men of wealth and standing in his own country, who had faith in him, were ready for a new invasion of England, of Europe, if he, or others like him, could show the way. It could have no attraction for him if it were not beneficent. He was going to make himself a rich man to the end of making himself a useful one. Yet where could be the certainty of that, after what he had seen in this direful object-lesson? It began to look as though all corporate life were but one eternal mode of slave-labor, the forms varying, but the mass ever in the position of the under dog. What had he seen as a mere tourist with his eyes open? A land that could not even feed its own people; a competitive system that had nothing nobler than sheer hunger and destitution for its starting-point; a most appalling poverty, a still more appalling wealth. Hundreds of thousands without so much as the assurance of the elementals of bed, clothing, and a crust, things without which no saint could take up his sainthood, no sage his parable, no workman his hammer, no writer his pen. It was sickening to feel that, after ages of stable and continuous civilization, no one had found out how to give everybody three meals a day and a clean shirt. And all the sages supposed to be at work on it stead-

ily, and all the statesmen, and all the churches! There must have been slackness somewhere. And still worse was it to know the gnawing doubt that he and all his precious labors as a coming captain of industry might only make things worse. He detested Socialism, and well-nigh all else ending with the same syllable. He was so sure that "these States" had found the secret in limitless freedom and limitless struggle, with wealth for the prize. Yet see what hideous results of these were before him in the old land!

He rose to leave, and to stamp off the chill of the night air. The foxy man, watchful through the slits of his eyes, seemed to feel that if his "missus" was to earn the guerdon already paid, she had better make haste.

"There was one o' that missionary lot as took up with 'em, so I 've heared say. They ain't no class for me." He nodded at the woman, as though urging her to speak. "She knows."

She went on smoking.

Then he swore at her. "Can't yer open yer mouth an' tell the gentleman? Yer 've got 'is money in yer pocket."

Arthur looked at her. It was the sex, after all, even in this ghastly image.

"Don't talk to her like that."

She eyed him as though he were some wandering child of the sun, out of his sphere, and muttered: "Place over a fried-fish shop off Poplar Road.

Pawnshop at the corner. 'Christi'n 'Ope Sersiety.' They might know."

The mission woman, seen next day, could only shake her head. "I 'm afraid the Herions have sunk out of our reach. There 's a point where these people touch the lower levels of misery and are quite lost. All of us are useless in that slough, though some don't like to confess it. The Salvation Army, which is the charwoman of the Church, fails there. I knew Mrs. Herion very well: a quiet, hard-working woman —pretty, too; proud as a duchess in her humble way. There is n't enough work to go round for such as they. If the wages rise a bit, up goes the rent along with it. There 's always somebody, a landlord or a sweater, to grab every penny of the increase. If you housed them for nothing, down would go the earnings to the point at which the poor things could just manage to eat and drink. The Herions had saved a little while his work lasted, but her confinement and the loss of work together pulled them down. And they went from bad to worse when they came this way. The rent was crushing. It keeps pace with the very need of shelter. The greater the crowd, the dearer the homes. In this quarter they are asking 'key money' now, a premium on the right of a mere first chance in the scramble for a lodging. What is London to do with all these human misfits? Why don't we find out how to keep them in their villages? How can they strike out with their wretched education, suited to their 'state in life'?

You may walk round with me, if you like, to see our poor—very decent, all of them. Some of them might be able to tell you more than I can. Rose always tried to keep the best company among them."

He went with her as a forlorn hope. The utter inadequacy of the remedy to the disease was disheartening. The missioners had evidently no grip on it. The soft deans by whom they were more remotely inspired rarely mentioned the religion of economic relations, the root of the matter, to ears polite. Their silence was not time-serving, but conviction. It was policy, too. If they rashly tampered with the doctrine that everybody should grow as rich as he could, where would charity get its ten-pound note?

A few old people eked out a scanty subsistence under her care. It was better than nothing, perhaps, but—all around! One, a sort of specimen number, asked Mr. Gooding if he happened to know the shortest verse in the Bible. As it did happen, he was able to tell her. Then came a poser: What was the word that stood in the very middle of the sacred book? He gave it up. She named it with triumph as the result of efforts that had cost her six months' application to the dreary business of the count.

He turned away with his rather shamefaced guide.

"When did you last see the Herions?" he asked.

"George had gone out again to look for work. Rose was lying ill on the bed in a dismal room, still and quiet, with a baby opening its eyes, for the first time, on a vista of East End back yards. A mouse,

trustful in the stagnant peace, foraged for its breakfast, and hardly stirred when I came in."

"Who sublets such holes?"

" 'Speculators.' "

"Who owned that one?"

"The Duke of Allonby, I believe."

Arthur left town that night to report.

XXX



HREE months of the country season have passed, with their round of sport and play according to the rubric, and we are now at the opening of a new year. Allonby, by general consent, has never seen the like of it. There has been one steady whirl of ordered movement, as brisk in its way as the rotation of the earth. The only thing that saves us in the general arrangement is that the planet is forever on the go. If once it paused to take stock of itself, we might all be shivered into fragments. Having no time for reflection, Augusta has been able to take the congratulations of her friends in good part, and to admit that her success has been almost without a flaw.

Yet, in the very moment of supreme satisfaction, there came a doubt. In one thing she had to own failure. The Herions were still waiting for ducal justice, still undiscovered—of late, even, still unsought. The sense of right was still strong with her. The sense of the smart of failure was just as strong, for she was as inconsistent in her virtues as the rest of us.

The truth is, she had won over the duke alone,

and the system was still against her. He had consented to the reinstalment of the Herions, but the agent, the family solicitors, in fact the whole permanent staff of management, had resolved that his order should never be carried out. He had told them to advertise. They advertised in the leading journal! A dock-laborer seeking himself in an agony column at threepence a peep was a grotesque conception, but he could not realize that. He suggested private detectives. The private detectives took their cue from those who instructed them, the more so as they naturally languished without the stimulus of a scandal or a crime. Augusta was puzzled at first, until George Herion's mother gave her the clue. "They not goin' to 'ave 'em back, your Grace, till they come in their coffins—mark that!" Then it all flashed on Augusta in an instant: "they" meant the counterplot. She colored with resentment and indignation, and determined to find her birds for herself.

Yet Allonby still claimed her for the moment, and in the most imperative way. Its brilliant season was to have an ending of supreme splendor in the visit of a royal pair. Invitations were out for a great party to meet the duke and duchess whose place was on the steps of the throne.

It was the day of their arrival. The castle looked watchfulness and expectation from every port-hole. All were at their posts, from the steward to the scullions. It was the first visit of an heir in the direct line of succession for over a century, and this one

had still some of the interest of mystery. He had been brought up in the close companionship of the best of mothers, one of the most beautiful and the most devout women of her time, and still as youthful to look at as her own children.

The struggle for invitations to the house-party had been unusually keen. The party was limited to thirty; and, according to custom, every name had been submitted in the highest quarter. The host and hostess had drawn up their lists. The royal duke and duchess had used the blue pencil freely, to strike in or to strike out. There could not have been more orderly fuss about it if the choice of so many ambassadors had been the matter in hand.

For, the truth is, these august persons had the reputation of social austerity in the court circle. The prince had his mother's horror of the smart set, and his wife was known to share his sentiments to the full. The set would cheerfully have left both alone in their glory, but it had to reckon with them in spite of itself. To be at Allonby on such an occasion was, no doubt, to endure intolerable boredom; yet not to be there was, in some measure, to be classed. The prince was eminently "serious"; and it was well understood that when his day came society would have to toe the line.

The figurative expression bore a literal reference. It was really a question of the right sort of toe for the purpose. The illustrious person was familiarly known to the set as "Young Square Toes." This meant nothing to the prejudice of his bootmaker,

but only that the customer, in spite of a limited count of years, was smitten with incurable age of mind. Some of those who called him Square Toes were hoary with eld; but that did not matter. Their "footwear" was their accepted symbol of eternal youth. One symbol will serve as well as another to signify the most profound difference in the view of life. At one time, as we know, it was the cut in love-locks; to-day it is the cut in shoe-leather: yet Cavalier and Roundhead maintain their everlasting conflict amid the changes of form. And, after all, the more joyous party may easily be commended to our sense of dignity by regarding them as a sort of Pointed Order of the fabric of state.

The Square Toes, by common consent of the others, stood for the dullness of respectability and the gloom of the moral law—in fact, for the reaction toward puritanism in a court that had long been going it too fast. The Points, as they were familiarly called, were for the *joie de vivre,* and for every other felicitous phrase that signified the yearning for a good time. They were for taking this life in a galliard and in a coranto, whatever might be the fortunes of the next.

It was war to the knife between them, as a matter of course, though their animosity was naturally tempered in expression by their good breeding. The Squares detested the Points as threatening ruin to the nation and discredit to the throne. The Points despised and ridiculed the Squares as killjoys whose coming supremacy meant sackcloth for court-dress.

Many a Point disappeared beneath the blue pencil in the course of revision. Some got through by a timely fit of mealy-mouthedness, or by good judgment in lying low. It would have been impossible to sacrifice all of them. If the proscription had been too rigorous, there might have been no house-party.

When all was done, the factions were exceedingly well defined. The Squares included that unblemished nobleman Lord Ogreby, whose acquaintance Augusta had made soon after her arrival, with several members of his family. The earl was known for the rigor of his evangelical principles and for the studied simplicity of his life. Whatever else was served at his board, boiled mutton always had a place there; and, by friendly consultation with his tailor, he had contrived to introduce homespun into the composition of his dress-suit. His hose, for all occasions, were of hodden-gray. You might have ruled a ledger with the ends of his shoes. These circumstances, however, are of minor importance, for of course the actual costume of the sections was only in accidental conformity with their symbolic name. The earl was accompanied by his son and heir, Lord Beglerbeg, who stood high in Christian Science, and by a daughter, Lady Francesca Darton, who held a humble rank in the Salvation Army, and wore its serge, its bonnet, and its badge in the most glittering throngs. This was the best the neighborhood could afford in the ultra-respectability of devotion. But that qualification was not exacted by the illustrious visitors, who asked only for decency.

Two or three ministers and as many of the highest judges supplied gravity without any admixture of the ridiculous. With these were a few who looked in vain for an opening in great affairs, and who were part of that strength of England which is running to waste for want of organization. Mr. Bascomb, the High-church dignitary of Slocum Magna, was almost of the party, though he was not in social residence. But he came and went by special desire of Mr. Gooding, who had a great respect for him, and by pressing invitation of Augusta. Another contingent, quite after the prince's own heart, was that of the sportsmen, who, for the most part, were saved from frivolity by the manliness of their tastes.

The Points were variously composed. There was Mr. Kenneth McAlister Bruce, a magnate of modern finance who had nothing of the Scotsman but the astuteness and the name. It was enough, especially the first. He had shootings in the Highlands, a house in Park Lane, a hand in well-nigh every enterprise of moment in the country, though ostensibly his transactions were confined to the China trade. You found him everywhere. You burrowed into underground tubes: there he was. You coquetted with new and far-reaching patents: he was there, too. He financed—there it is, in a word. He was ready with the requisite subvention for every good thing going. Had he been present at the rise of Mohammedanism, he would have found the money for the advance on Mecca, and secured exclusive banking privileges with the new faith. He bore arms—on his

note-paper; he spoke English with the accent of Frankfort; he was bold and resolute, and in the further reaches of his operations he was, no doubt, a man of blood at need. But with his command of the best legal advice he could take a pound of flesh without any fear of the law. Neither his feet nor his manners were made for the Pointed style, and he walked Turkish carpets as uneasily as the ancient chief of his order walked the burning marl. He had the bluffness of his tremendous consciousness of strength, and, in all his transactions with his fellowmen, a sort of terrifying air of throwing off the mask. He was rude to them. They knew it, and knew that he knew it, too. Therein was one of the secrets of his power. He had obliged the royal house; and while, with them, he paid due regard to the forms, he made no difficulty of alluding to the duke's chief guest as "the youngster," over his cigar. Women of the highest rank he snubbed to their faces in return for his encouragement of their futile hopes for information as to the way to get rich.

In his division, and, to some extent, in his train, was a courtly set of young men from Oxford, all of good birth, and with nothing but good breeding for their share of its supposed heritage of the humanities. They were young men who believed in making great strokes on the stock exchange and enjoying life—not coarsely, indeed, for they knew the value of refinement in pleasure as an element of staying power. They had found what they conceived was a short cut to that Epicurean goal for which men

have so long striven—a state in which we may neither suffer nor fear, a state of the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the mind. In this respect they were the very latest outcome of Oxford culture, and their rise had providentially synchronized with the world-embracing bequest of Mr. Rhodes.

Another social interest was represented by the services, and by the army in particular. These persons, high in command, knew that they had a good thing in our military system, and meant to hold it for themselves and their dependents, at least quite as firmly as they could have held a beleaguered fort. They were already casting far-seeing glances to the future, when the close of the war might bring home a victorious general whose soul hungered to restore the Roman discipline and the Roman simplicity. They had no ill will for that general, but they wished to put him in his place, and they were determined to balk his berserker rage against incompetence by keeping the supreme control of the military machine in their own hands. They were accordingly preparing for his promotion to a post of great dignity beyond the seas in which he might employ his ravening energies with profit to the country, without disturbing the even tenor of their own way.

At the head of a section more immediately devoted to the arts was an amiable nobleman who enjoyed a great reputation as a collector. In a richly stocked land such as England, the gathering of pictures and statuary is mainly a thing of the past. The old country has all it wants in that line, and,

besides, America has grown so insistent. But the curious has taken the place of the beautiful, and the culture of the postage-stamp shows that wealth and research need never be without an object. The nobleman in question had discovered a new hobby. Playbills were denied him by mere anticipation. It was the same with china and the various forms of hardware. But there remained one line of virgin enterprise—omnibus and tram-car tickets. He had begun to collect these treasures for the benefit of posterity too late in their history to give him the command of them at cost price. But he was willing to pay handsomely for his neglect, and he had secured with incredible pains the first issues of nearly all the southern lines of the metropolis, and well-nigh every example of the northern section dating from the period of the assumption of control by the County Council. Of one or two of these, indeed, he possessed costly proofs before letters—specimens without the stamp of their date. He was also by no means ill provided with foreign examples, and he had paid particular attention to the transatlantic, in the modest hope of contributing his quota to the promotion of the American alliance. His albums, adorned with a book-plate of his coronet and the well-known motto, "Punch, boys, punch; punch with care," boasted a first Milwaukee, and an early San Francisco; and he was now in treaty for a primitive Salt Lake City, which had necessitated advances, not altogether agreeable in themselves, to the successors of the Mormon prophet.

He was fortunate in finding a contingent of Americans at Allonby on this occasion to sympathize with his efforts, if not to aid him in his work. One or two of these were actually English by adoption, and even by the change of nationality. They had all the peculiarities of local accent, and the tricks of manner—at times in the proportions of caricature. They were even prepared to suggest a belief that the Declaration of Independence was only a regrettable fit of temper, and that, by a proper exercise of forbearance on the part of the mother-country, it might yet admit of modifications importing a return to more filial sentiments. These were present, not by the good will of the duchess, but by the request of the royal pair. It was appropriate, after a fashion, for they were of those who are more royalist than the king. They had caught everything of the tone of a ruling caste, except, perhaps, the necessary reserves of prudence. Their estates on English soil were managed with a rigor of the rights of possession which gave the wandering lover of the beautiful no share in their glories and the resident poor but scant hopes of the falling crumb.

XXXI



HE arrival was in semi-state. The duke awaited the royal pair at the station with postilions and outriders. The Volunteers performed the services for which Volunteers appear to exist in peaceful climes. Augusta, looking her loveliest, was at her threshold. To a nice observer her smile of welcome might have seemed to lack conviction. Circumstances had somewhat shaken her faith in the institutions of which the symbols were the glittering pageant, the bowing pair, and the roaring crowds. Though the village made as much noise as ever, she could not but be aware of the two souls that had dropped out of its reckoning since she herself came to Allonby with blare of trumpet and beat of drum. The Knuckle of Veal, however, demonstrated as cheerily as though nothing had happened. Job Gurt toasted the royal family in the parlor. Mr. Grimber gave them personal encouragement with heart, or at any rate with hat and voice, outside. He was ably seconded by Mr. Raif, who led the shouting of the village choir. Mary and her father were among the first to be presented. Mr. Kisbye was effectually absent, as before; yet, for all that, he contrived to signalize his

existence by a flaunting banner and the discharge of an impertinent gun.

A glance at the chief guest served to show the extreme injustice of party nomenclature. He had been seriously maligned by his nickname. His toe-caps would have gone through the eye of a needle. Nor was there the slightest severity in his manner. His air was not wanting in cordiality; and if he had a fault, it was only in a certain excess of correctness. It was probably but an effect of shyness: he seemed to have been exceedingly well brought up.

His demeanor toward the Points left little to be desired. He seemed absolutely unaware of their existence as a faction, and he received their homage as though rehearsing for his future part of the father of all his people. His consort followed his lead. Their ladies and gentlemen in attendance bore themselves with less tact, and were to be suspected of a sniff.

There was barely time to dress for the great dinner which was the chief ceremonial feature of the day. The luggage poured in from the distant railway-station in the wake of the visitors, and the village kept in line to cheer the brakes long after it had caught the last sight of the carriages.

It was understood that, for all the three days of the visit, the same costume would not be worn twice. The maids had the care-worn look of trainers engaged in the last touches on racing day. They peeped over the great staircase with an air of mingled

triumph and solicitude as they delivered their starters at scratch for the procession from the drawing-room.

If the banquet was at first depressing in its solemnity, it was all the fault of the Points. They were too manifestly on their good behavior, and their enforced homage to the sense of propriety seemed to freeze the genial current of their souls. They confined themselves, for the most part, to the generalities of sport; but one who happened to be nearest to the prince branched off into the question of Arctic travel, with no very conspicuous success. The Squares had an easier part to play. They had only to eat their dinner to feel perfectly at their ease. Lord Ogreby, flattered by a special attention of the chef to his yearnings for boiled mutton, softened into a joke which seemed to give a final touch of intensity to the prevailing gloom. The meal might have been a total failure but for the happy accident of a report, in stealthy circulation, which seemed to divide the honors of curiosity between Mr. Gooding and the prince. It was whispered that the young Californian was the agent in advance of a new colossal combination which was to make the roast beef of old England a mere side-dish to American pork and beans. He knew nothing of the cause of the attentions which were showered on him in consequence; but, being human, he could only be pleased by their effect. Strong men sought to catch his eye with glances of respect. Beautiful and high-born women unmistakably gave him permission to offer his

homage at a later stage. The Bruce himself, for the moment, was in eclipse. Arthur's looks and his unfailing courtesy were other things that told in his favor. He was surrounded in the drawing-room, while the Bruce scattered incivilities in his path without so much as the correction of a fan.

The support of his own countrywomen set the seal on Mr. Gooding's success. A few gave it reluctantly, under the uneasy suspicion that he might, after all, be only something in literature or art. They were naturally more exclusive in this respect than the society whose manners they aped. His relationship to the duchess, his education, and his bearing would not have sufficed; for, to say the truth, these fastidious persons were only watching for the opportunity of snubbing Augusta as a parvenue in her own home. She had not given them the opportunity; that was all. The rumor of her brother's share in cosmic finance seemed to decide the matter in his favor.

"I am still not so sure that he is in New York society," said one of them to Lady Ogreby, "but I will go as far as this: if both of us were there now, I should send him a card for my next party."

Lady Ogreby, a plain woman in more senses than one, seemed mystified.

"Because he 's rich?"

"No; not that, exactly."

"I see. He has such nice manners."

"Oh, dear, no."

"Then manners don't count?"

"Yes, they do; and yet—"

"And wealth is not everything?"

"On the contrary; yet—"

"And you 've no such thing as rank?"

"In one way of looking at it; but—"

The old lady listened in a state of stupefaction. Her only clear impression was a confirmation of her dislike of the subtleties of the Athanasian creed.

The entertainment put a stop to further conversation. It was of the usual kind: stars of opera at a guinea a note; a short drawing-room comedy in one act by distinguished amateurs, most superbly costumed; a fencing-bout by a French and an English performer of the first distinction. A zenana dance by a young lady, wherewith the Points had hoped to secure a little of the fun of the fair, had been ruled out by the blue pencil. The discomfited party yawned through the program until the withdrawal of the royal pair enabled them to seek their consolation in the smoking-room. Hard fate, however, attended them even here. The Squares invaded this scene of repose with the royal duke at their head. For a time the talk, in deference to his tastes, turned almost exclusively on the prospects of to-morrow's sport. But Providence was still watchful over the dispirited faction, and at the third cigarette he took his leave, with the most of the Squares in his train. It is the unwritten law of such gatherings everywhere: the Points usually sit out the others, but, until this comes to pass, the conversation is kept within the safest limits. At a later period it takes, if not a wider, a more personal, range; and with the small

hours it is apt to descend to scandals, with those who feel themselves sure of one another both in taste and in respect for the professional secret. When successive reductions have brought about a final survival of the unfittest, you may hear anything you are willing to listen to. As the hours wore on, that glittering Point, Tom Penniquicke, was telling how the true heir to the greatest peerage in England now languished as a publican on one of his late father's town estates, for want of the power to establish his rights, if not even of the very knowledge of them—confined to Tom and his set. He was also able to show how the equally innocent usurper of his title was really of peasant origin on one side. It was rather fresh to the listeners, but the servants knew it all by heart.

And the evening and two o'clock the next morning were the first day.

XXXII



HE Square-Toed faction of the court held the field, and all was moral improvement at Allonby Castle. The frivolous Pointed Toes were still in eclipse. Mr. Raif saw that the chance of his life had come, and he made the most of it. If he could interest the royal visitors in his ministrations to the village poor, it might be the first step to a bishopric. He was a sort of despatch agent of blessings, earthly and divine. With him the model township was a sheepfold, with a shepherd who was the beneficent tyrant of its flock. In short, he was the middleman fighting for his own, an extremity in which the middleman is dour. He was keen to detect any infringement of his priestly right to the control of the human conscience. His choice example of the inadequacy of religious instruction in the board schools was an unfortunate reference to the columbines of Solomon which he professed to have had from a town-bred child.

And in so far as he consented in his own mind to share the dignities and the emoluments of agency, he could act only with the nobility and gentry. These and the clergy combined were the appointed

leaders of the people; and Mr. Raif was as sure that the latter wanted leading in body and in soul as any of his forerunners. He held firmly to the view of religion as mainly an affair of apparatus that finds so much favor in our day. When in London he always attended the ministrations of a colleague who enticed to brighter worlds by means of lantern-slides sandwiched in between the prayers and the sermon, and by catchy advertisements of the variety-show of the Sunday to come. These methods, as being specially suited to the treatment of the working-classes, were much admired by the superior clergy. Their inventor was understood to be assiduously preaching the art of standing on his head in the pulpit by way of crowning the edifice of the conversion of England.

Mr. Raif was much interested just now in a scheme for winning Job Gurt, the village sot, to total abstinence. The blacksmith had fallen on evil times in spite of his "good money." As his potations increased with plentiful earnings, his staying power at work naturally diminished. He had finally been compelled to make overtures for assistance, through his wife, to the domestic chaplain, and had been given to understand that redress of grievance must precede the grant of charitable supplies. Job was interesting as a character so materially minded that he could only conceive the resurrection of the body as an effect of pins and needles after unrefreshing sleep. The chaplain had formed the laudable design of wrestling for the possession of him with the powers of darkness as represented by the Knuckle

of Veal. He seemed likely to be successful: Job had capitulated on the imminence of a Saturday night without the prospect of a Sunday's dinner.

On the Friday evening, accordingly, the penitent was seated in the little club-house of the model village, with a determination to make himself as merry as circumstances admitted. Mr. Raif was prepared to meet him more than half-way. The gathering was avowedly for a convivial purpose, but its members were to wet their whistles with mineral waters for the bacchanalian songs dear to the old condition of lapse. Mr. Raif was in some measure the patentee of it, and he was proud of the achievement. With the one exception of the intoxicant, the associations were to be as nearly like those of the Knuckle of Veal as the circumstances allowed. The scheme was based on the idea of the coffee-tavern, in which the tippler is supposed to accept harmless liquors as a full and sufficient equivalent for strong drink, by having permission to call for them at a dismal bar. Its inventors have forgotten that, with all its faults, the bar of perdition is at least bright.

The struggle won the sympathetic attention of the village. There was a crowd about the club-house door to witness the arrival of Job. It was felt that his was a test case, and, moreover, that Satan was prepared to regard it in that light. Discomfited in this encounter, the fiend would probably trouble Slocum no more.

Half-past seven was the time for the revel, and at that hour the wretched Job entered the institute

with Mr. Grimber, as a kind of sponsor, by his side. The retired cockney tallow-chandler was as yet no convert, but he had come down, by invitation, to see how he liked it, and to report afterward to his own soul.

Mr. Raif was at the door to meet them; and shaking both cordially by the hand, he invited Job's attention to the fact that it was a fine evening with perhaps less success than he had a right to expect.

The blacksmith looked round the room, and found it at once as near to the pleasures of imagination and yet as far from those of sense as the star in the poem. The floor was sanded; the long, hard settle by the fireplace yielded hardly a point in discomfort to the like contrivance at the Knuckle of Veal. There were real pipes over the mantelpiece, long and white, as though they were meant for business. From sheer force of habit the unhappy man stretched out his hand for one of them, and, addressing the boy in waiting,—made up with real apron and real shirt-sleeves,—called for a screw of tobacco.

"A very natural mistake," said Mr. Raif, urbanely, but with a frown that silenced the rising titter. "Bring a little soap and water: Job might like to blow a bubble or two. We are no foes to innocent recreation here. We welcome it, in fact."

It was brought, and Mr. Raif blew a few bubbles by way of example. One of them made its way out of the window. It was followed on the opening of its journey into infinite space with a shout by the urchins, and a smile, as of happy omen, by Mrs.

Gurt and other matrons who had now joined the group.

Job shook his head, relinquished the pipe, and pushed the dish of soap-suds from him as he might have done some new variety of tipple repugnant to the conservatism of his British taste.

"Not me," he whispered to his henchman.

"Time 's flying, Jasper," said Mr. Raif. "I think we 'd better get on."

The man addressed, an old shepherd whose guiding principle of action seemed to be to stand well with the parson, took the chair without further invitation, and with the brief remark, "Give your orders, gents."

"Now, Gurt," cried Mr. Raif, cheerily, "ginger-beer, soda, lemonade—squash, if you fancy it; but it 'll cost you a ha'penny more."

"Pop," murmured Job, in the tone of a dying man

"Gents," said the chairman, when all were served, "the usual loyal. Charge your glasses. The Queen!" It was part of Mr. Raif's method to begin the evening with this toast as a happy compromise between a brutish indifference to the providential order and inadmissible prayer.

Job sipped his ginger-beer as a sign that he wished no harm to constituted authority, but, for the rest, seemed to reserve his opinion. The others, who were better used to it, drank with less evident distaste.

Mr. Raif was the only person who showed no mis-

giving. He was quite convinced that this was the entirely proper way with the humbler classes. You trained them, and they obeyed as naturally as shrubs took their cue from the volition of the gardener. He patted Job on the back as though he were a kind of scapegoat for the inflictions of the whole party. "That 's right, boys; keep it up. I must leave you now. Sing, drink anything you like—within the rules. There they are on the wall. And don't forget Rule XIII—break up at half-past nine."

There was silence after he left. It might have been a perfectly tolerable silence if it had not been so heavily charged with self-consciousness and the sense of playing a part.

"I s'pose we 'd better go on," said Jasper, looking timidly at the door by which their tyrant had left.

"Aye; sing a bit, an' get it over, man," said another. "He 'll 'ear 'e pretty sharp if ye doan't. Then we might have a game at baggytelle."

"Well, could n't ye tune up a bit, Job?" asked Jasper. " 'In Cellar Deep'—'D' ye ken John Peel?' —any blessed thing ye like. I 've heared ye 're a pretty good performer."

"Mate, I ain't got a note in me," moaned Job, from the depths of his anatomy, "to save my life."

"Give us 'Cellar Deep,' Jasper; that may start un."

The chairman accordingly cleared his throat and set out in his quavering way through a bacchanalian

poem of a whole-hearted depravity of taste that makes it unique in the language:

"In cel-lar deep I sit and keep
My soul from cares op-pres-sing,
Com-pan-ion mine, the good Rhine wine,
Earth's sweet-est, tru-est bless-ing.
With so-lemn pate let wis-dom prate
Of what we should be think-ing:
Give me my glass; my days shall pass
In drink-ing, drink-ing, drink-ing."

Done, as it was on this occasion, in split sodas, it is the very triumph of make-believe. But in the idle singing of our empty day it has probably been the cause of more hypocrisy than any other song in the world. Its reckless burden shows how easily it may have lent itself to mere pot-valiancy at the best of times. Few could have hoped to live up to this ideal, even in the Georgian ages of faith. And in ours it is almost confessedly the hollow lie of the smug tradesman at his masonic dinner and of the basso of the convivial club. The syllabic pauses in the measure of the chorus are obligatory for their effect of intensity of conviction. And when the last one of them has been rendered, with due effect, from the very depths of being, one is transported to a world of good-fellowship which seems a foretaste of the stars. There is no time so propitious for the borrowing of half-crowns. But in our decorous day it is no more than a reminiscence of some golden

age when rack punch produced no headache and Irish twist was good for the bile. The basso is only playing at it, and is probably the most exemplary of bank-clerks. His hearers are only playing at it; but their occasional sips of real strong waters are great helps to the make-believe of the game. Yet there are limits to this power of illusion; and, for all but the strongest natures, tea and cocoa and even temperance champagne are a too abrupt descent from the heights of artificial stimulation which they are supposed to feign.

The first verse was enough for poor Job. After an ineffectual attempt to bear his part in the chorus, he set down his untasted cup of institute coffee and staggered forth into the night, brushing from his path the inquisitive group at the door.

"Blessed if he ain't got 's load in spite of 'em," said one of the women.

"Nay," said his more experienced spouse, sorrowfully; "it 's only temper this time, I reckon—and the wuss of the two."

All expected to see him wend his way to the Knuckle of Veal, but they were deceived. He made straight for his own cottage, pursued by the echoes of

> "Pour out the Rhine wine, let it flow
> Like a full and shining river,"

which the company were now washing down with sassafras, a new beverage just introduced to their notice by Mr. Raif.

XXXIII



ATURDAY afternoon, and Job in a bit of fairyland all by himself, smoking his pipe on the trunk of a fallen tree. He has not wholly lapsed, in spite of the bitter experience of yesterday. The pipe may be a backsliding, but there is still a good half-mile of innocence between him and the can of the Knuckle of Veal. He is in a broad glade of woodland, bright in the sunshine of winter, and indestructibly beautiful all the year round. There is temptation, however, at each end, for at the farther one stands the inn of the Duke and the Ditcher. Both houses are rooted only less deep in time than the wood itself. The latter is part of an old royal chase where thousands of fat bucks have died the death according to the laws of forestry. Nothing can exceed the charm of this winding way between the two taverns, with its tiny river, broadening here and there into pools where the fish often play at hide-and-seek with the flashes of light and with the flies caught in their ray. But all this, being a thing of use and wont, is quite thrown away upon Job. He is certainly not thinking of its history, running

back into the very Saxon time, of its weird old manor-house, where they hatched one of the deadliest plots in English annals, of its caves once haunted by the outlaw bands whose industry was plunder. Every tree may conceivably have its story of tryst and council, and even of summary execution when the deer-stealer caught red-handed was hoisted high in the wind. Wicked old trees they look, for all their beauty. Most of their coating of bark is gone forever, and some lie grim and unrepentant in their ruin, where the winter storms, rather than the woodman, have cut them down.

So there sits Job on one of them, musing on the hardness of the road to Jordan, and between two portals of Paradise barred to him by his vow. His back is turned on the village and on the Knuckle of Veal, but for this very reason his face is toward that point of the compass where the Duke and the Ditcher is visible to the eye of faith. Look which way he will, in fact, there is a snare of the enemy. And presently a fellow-creature comes in sight, in the person of Mr. Grimber, strolling from the hamlet served by the last-named house.

"Day, Job."

"Day, Mr. Grimber."

The slight distinction in the mode of salutation was due to Grimber as a man of independent means.

"Home all right last night, Job?"

"Could n't very well go wrong, as I see."

Mr. Grimber, as already explained, had squired Job in his quest of repentance. He had no ex-

cesses of his own to correct, but he had thought it neighborly to stand by a friend in his hour of trial.

"Nice thing to be able to get up in the mornin' without a head on ye."

"It is that," said Job, dutifully.

"And with your money in your pocket."

"That 's so."

"A week more of it, and you 'll be like me."

He said it with a certain sadness, for, to tell the truth, he pitied his crony in the prospect. His secret longing was for something to give a pulse to life. It was the stronger now that, for Job's sake, he had cut himself off from his modest potation and the chatter of the inn. It is all very well to be the perfect ratepayer, but that Nirvana of civic propriety has its drawbacks and its trials. It is attainable only by a series of negations, and these are hard fare for the spirit of man. Grimber hardly knew what was the matter with him, except that he was weary of his own perfections. He had never done wrong, in so far as he could detect the thing by his limited knowledge of its opposite, yet he had still missed his reward. His religion was a matter of what he regarded as "decent observance"—a silk hat on Sundays, a black coat, alertness in the responses, a recognizable contribution to the volume of the hymn. His domestic icon was a lithograph of a royal family that he honored not only with his lips but with his heart. He called one of its members, who was prudence personified, "our sailor prince," and tried to figure him to consciousness as a rollick-

ing blade. He was of that lowest middle class that is a bulwark of Britain, and at once its pride and its despair. His gospel was convention, his law the fiat of his betters in church and state. His life as a retired tallow-chandler was almost absolutely without events. Its terrific sensations were the unwonted recurrence of a grand bezique and a sequence in the same hand; its herculean labors, the turning out of the corner cupboard this day week, or the fortnightly polishing of a watch-case with shammy leather without injury to the works. And yet and yet— People behindhand with their rent, and actually without hope of mercy for unpaid rates, seemed sometimes to get so much more out of life.

"Which way are you walking?" he said to Job.

"Yourn, if you like."

"I was thinkin' of gettin' 'ome again."

So they turned toward the hamlet, still following the fairy pathway of the glade.

"I sometimes feel funny-like, in a manner of speakin'," Mr. Grimber said.

It was a difficult complaint to diagnose on such indications. Job did not make the attempt. "I 've felt that way myself," was his reply.

The hamlet was now in sight, its most conspicuous object an ornamental glass ball, quicksilvered in laundry blue, which marked the garden-patch of Mr. Grimber's home.

"Will you come in and have a bottle o'—pop?" said Mr. Grimber. "Or, stop a minute: I 'll bring it outside. It 's cleanin'-up day, an' she might fancy there was mud on our boots."

"If there was any other place, we need n't trouble her, need us?" said Job.

There was a creaking noise overhead: it was the sign of the Duke and the Ditcher swinging gently in the breeze.

"Match that for music if you can," said Job, apostrophizing an observant bird.

Mr. Grimber looked up at the same moment, and their eyes met.

"Just one," said Job. In another moment they were in the parlor of the inn.

What is the philosophy of this wretched habit? Possibly mere association of ideas. Certain it is that, hitherto of all creatures the most forlorn, Job no sooner had an earthenware pitcher before him, nay, sniffed its mere coming in the ale-house reek, than he became quite another man. And, curiously enough, nature, powerless over him till now, began to woo him with effect. He chirruped responsively to a robin on the window-sill, plucked a twig from the garden and put it in his coat. To feel this top of the morning in one's blood without the help of fermentations must be the triumph of the strenuous life. Perhaps, indeed, there is no feeling it without some extraneous aid: it is as hard a problem as ever to lift yourself in your own basket. Natures are to be known and classed by the aids they seek. Shall it be woman's eyes, stringed instruments, or a bottle and a jug?

It was much the same with Grimber. Both men, clown and tallow-chandler, became in a trice hu-

mane, courteous, affable, preventive, according to their degree and their breeding in every service of the gentler life—extraordinary creatures that we are.

"We known each other a long time, Mr. Grimber."

"An' respected each other, I 'ope, Mr. Gurt; 't any rate, I—"

"Call me Job, if you doan' mind. Funny I never 'eared your Christian name."

"It ain't much of a one for friendship—Ebenezer. Grim 's what she calls me."

"You 're a trump-card, Grim."

"I do my best."

"I ain't used this place much: my end 's the Knuckle o' Veal."

"Nor me, either. This one 's a bit too near the 'ouse."

"An', besides, there is n't the same company. I will say that, Grim."

"Ever hear the story o' the sign?"

"Yes, an' want to 'ear it ag'in."

"Well, it 's like this. Years an' years ago there was another Duke of Allonby, an' he was 'untin' in these parts—in the days when 'untin' was somethin' like. He 'ad young noblemen to 'old 'is sterrups for 'im when 'e mounted, an' 'e was as good as a king. Well, one day he 'd gone on so greedy after a fat buck that he lost all 'is people an' 'e finds 'isself alone.

"There was a ditcher at work by the roadside, an' the duke 'e runs up to ask 'is way. But, afore he could get a start, the ditcher 'e says: 'Young man,

they say the duke 's a-'untin' in these parts; I 'll stand a jug o' ale if you can point 'im out. I bin 'is bondman for thirty year,' 'e says, 'an' I 've a fancy to see the look of 'im before I die.'

"'Brown ale?' says the duke.

"'Brown an' nappy,' says the ditcher.

"'Come wi' me,' says the duke.

"''Ow 'm I to know it 's 'im before I part wi' my money?' says the ditcher. 'E was no fool.

"''E 'll be the only man wearin' 'is 'at,' says the duke, 'when all the others is standin' around.'

"'Then I can show ye where they others is,' says the ditcher.

"So they jogged on till they came to a great open place—over yonder to this day—where all the nobility an' gentry was standin' about, with a sort o' worried look, waitin' for their master.

"The moment they see 'im, down they goes on their knees, off goes their 'ats (bonnets they called 'em in those times, both male an' female), an' they begins 'orn-blowin' for joy.

"'Which be the duke?' says the ditcher.

"'Well, us two is the only ones kivered,' says t' other: 'so it must be either you or me.'

"Down drops the ditcher on both knees, with 'is 'ands up. 'Spare a poor man's life, my lord,' says 'e.

"'Where 's that jug of ale?' says the duke, laughin'; an' they rode off to this very 'ouse to 'ave it, with all the others trampin' behind.

"When they 'd finished it, the duke 'e stands 'im

one more, an' then, 'I make you my 'ead forester,' 'e says—just like that. Them was the days!"

"An' all dead an' gone," said Job.

"We must be stirrin', lad," said Grimber, relapsing into melancholy. "Enough 's as good as a feast."

"You might see me a bit o' the way 'ome," said Job. "I 'm close to the Knuckle."

"I know it, lad; too close. There 's your trouble, Job."

"I like your company. I never knew the kind o' man you was till this day."

"I—she!"

They went back through the wood talking of good men aging, good men gone, touching life with the poetry without which it is a dead thing to the dullest soul. The lowest wretch lives on only for the hope of hours like these. We must idealize human relations or die. Every man is a poet, if only the few sing. The British navvy, that thing of granite, is quite mawkish in his cups, and gushes with a fervor that would put a miss in her teens to shame. The boor of Teniers sees heaven as a transparency through the bottom of his upturned can. The whole business of saint, sage, and social reformer is to help us to see it without a headache next morning. Music is perhaps only an alcoholic wave purged of its grossness. Where would the devil be but for the dullness of some lives? Their talk was worthy of the wood, of the sunshine, of the luminous shade below it, of the whole beautiful world.

Then they came to the Knuckle of Veal.

The Knuckle of Veal understood it all in a glance, and gave them "the time of day," but took no other notice, as they fell into their accustomed places.

It was as old in memories as the Duke and the Ditcher, and just such another shanty of prehistoric planks in the upper story, rough-cast, and Elizabethan brickwork in the lower, tile and thatch above, blackened beams to hold it all together, old brown outhouses where Jack Ostler had called to Tom Tapster in the earliest coaching times, and thirty farmers' chaises, all with yellow wheels, had been put upon market-days; a tap-room with a fireplace of wrought iron whereto generations of shepherds watching their flocks by night had stolen from the hills for furtive comfort to talk the Armada and the landing of the Dutch king; a wainscot pock-marked all over with the incised initials of countless dead, monumental in its way, as deciphered by that Academy of Inscriptions, the ale-bench and the oldest inhabitant. What are you to do with such a place but keep out of it? And in this they failed.

"Only a drain this time," said Grimber. "I 've got my measure."

"Tol-lol! tol-lol!" sang Job. "Give us a toast, old corpse-light!"

It was purely accidental, but unfortunate. Grimber's father had been an undertaker.

"Who 're ye gettin' at?" he said, putting down his glass.

"It 's my fun, like," explained Job. "No offense, cocky."

"I don't like your fun," said Grimber. "I bin a ratepayer for forty year."

"Ratepayer yourself," said Job, incoherently.

"Wish I could return the compliment."

"That 's a snack 't me, I s'pose."

"Take it as y' like."

There was sullen silence for a while.

Job resumed: "Pity to spoil a good meetin'. Will y' 'ave a sentiment from me?"

"Out with it."

" 'Eart to 'eart an' 'and to 'and.' "

"That 's better," said the other, returning his grip.

"Tol-lol! tol-lol!" sang Job.

"Must be going now," said Grimber.

"I 'll see yer a bit of the way."

"Mean to say you think I 'm—"

"For 'eart to 'eart an' 'and to 'and; that 's all," said Job.

They sallied forth again, arm in arm. The scene was divine to both of them now, as they stepped aside to save a winter flower, giggled at the reflection of the scudding clouds in the pool—veritable babes in the wood.

"It 's a grand' world," said Job. "Take it fro' me."

"Never thought there was so many respec'ble people in it."

"A gran' life, Grim—gran' feller-creatur's! You 're one."

"Oh, as for that—"

"Never thought it, all the years I 've known yer. Fancied you was a bit of a milksop."

"No offense; fancied it myself sometimes."

"This 'ere religion they talk s' much about—should n't wonder if it was somethin' like what we 're feelin' now. Eh, Grim?"

"'T ain't all apistles an' collicks taken cold, lay your life."

"One more at the Ditcher—eh, Grim? Then you 'll see me a bit of the way back?"

Job had scarcely spoken when a shawled female figure came in sight, and his fellow-sinner was plucked from him as for translation to another sphere. It was done, not by a gesture, not by so much as a word: a single glance sufficed; but it was one of the right sort. He was alone.

It was a bereavement, yet St. Francis himself could hardly have been at less loss for companionship. Nature, which Job had had about him for half a century without his being aware of it, was there in visible presence at last. "Chip, chip, birdikin!" he cried to a sparrow in the path.

Cold obstruction had gone out of the whole frame of things, moral and physical. There was no more effort in the world. He walked on air, and with as much ease as any nymph of Guido's "Aurora." Earth was one vast pneumatic tire.

"Danged if I could n't finish it mysen now!" he

muttered, as he neared the Knuckle again. And he sat down on a fallen trunk, all smooth and silvery with eld, and resumed, as from the balked innings of the night before:

"In wo-man's smile there may be guile;
She 's skilled in arts de-ceiv-ing,
And she may be most false to me
When most I am be-liev-ing.
Friend more sin-cere I che-rish here,
While lips to glass I 'm link-ing,
And com-fort true the whole year through—"

He was about to collect himself for the supreme effort of the bass note when a composite apparition of a most extraordinary character came in full view at an angle of the glade. It consisted of the royal and ducal party from the castle, in charge of Mr. Raif. The princess and the duchess led the way, with the domestic chaplain as cicerone. The personages of the suite were a little in the background, with young Mr. Gooding. A knot of villagers haunting the footsteps of the great folks brought up the rear. Mrs. Gurt was among these, and Constable Peascod seemed to have them all in custody, as for some prospective offense. Arthur took a mean advantage of his being out of his sister's range of vision by showing that he still had the heart to smile. The faces of the others expressed blank consternation, though a close observer might have detected that the royal personage was ready on short notice

to give way. But Augusta's bearing awed all within reach of her glance. She looked stern displeasure, her beautiful head thrown back, her color coming and going, her lips firm-set. And, as a slight change of position brought him under her gaze, Mr. Gooding became as demure as the rest, and looked sadly toward the ground.

As for Mr. Raif, he was overwhelmed with confusion. It was the opportunity of a lifetime spoiled, and he gasped dismay as the bishopric seemed to fade off forever into the things that might have been. He had been leading the party round the whole circle of his good works—the model village, and all its apparatus of automatic virtue, and the village proper, with its selected poor in evidence and the others out of sight. He had arranged his itinerary so as to conclude the demonstration with a distant view of the Knuckle of Veal as a section of the inferno from which he had just rescued a soul in torment, when this wretched mischance occurred.

The only person quite at his ease was the offender. He beamed serenely on the whole party, and then tried to fix the princess herself with a smile that had in it unfathomed depths of ineptitude.

"Why, Gurt, what is the meaning of—" began Mr. Raif; but the rest was beyond his power.

"Is drink-ing, drink-ing, drink-ing,"

gurgled the miserable creature, to conclude his stave.

"Gurt, you 're intox—"

"John Barleycorn beats me, gents. I 'm 'appy when I 'm beat. Good aft'noon, all."

It was too painful to last. The royal party turned toward the castle as though they had pressing business in that quarter, and Constable Peascod laid hands on Job.

"Know the sayin', sir," cried the delinquent in a parting shot at Mr. Raif, " 'When you die it 's for a long time'?"

The village was about to relieve its long-pent-up feelings with a titter, when it was checked by a glance at Mrs. Gurt. She followed her wretched partner to the lockup as she might have followed him to his grave; and there was despair in her face as he was led off, still wearing his fatuous smile. Like many a woman before her, she was asking herself one of the bitterest of all questions—whether drink might not be a more terrible thing to bear in a man than infidelity itself. And, after all, infidelity of a kind it was, and the grossest. It was a counter-influence to hers, and that thought made for jealousy in its most corroding pang. The more sordid her triumphant rival, the more galling the sense of her own inferiority of attraction. A living woman, after all, was a worthier conqueror. It was champion against champion, and discomfiture by nothing more humiliating than the luck of the lists. But defeat by a mere swinish appetite!

"Tell him I think he 's a brute beast, Mrs. Jukes," she said to the inspector's wife. "And—jest loosen his neck-hankecher, if you doan' mind."

He was frivolous still, and insisted on giving his name as Tobit for the charge-sheet.

There was this excuse for him: the rural station was hardly a place to bring a man to repentance with a sharp turn—prison, if you like, but still a prison in Arcadia. An old cottage converted to its present uses, it was rather a residence for the two constables in charge than a house of detention. Its red brick stained with age, its latticed windows overlooking a churchyard which seemed but a change-house on the road to heaven, its walls of loam and timber overhanging a ground floor that had once been upright but was now not ashamed of looking tired, were all perfect beauty. So was the low doorway, with the neatly dressed children playing on the step, under the eye of a fatherly official at the desk within, while the house-mother bustled to and fro between the sitting-room and kitchen to make tea. Arcadia, in spite of the handcuffs hanging over the porch, a feeble effort of the law to look terrible belied by everything else in the place. Emblems merely—no more. An emblem, too, the strange antediluvian contrivance—a sort of scaffold-pole with a hook at the end—that ran the whole length of the side wall. It was a relic of the days when the villagers struggled with fire as best they might, the men fishing for goods and chattels with this unwieldy rod, and the women praying for a good catch. As for the two cells, they were but a mild joke perpetrated at the expense of the outhouses in the back yard. Job was consigned to one of them that happened to

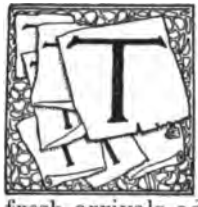
be empty; the other still held the logs for the winter fire.

The inspector's wife had brought him a cup of tea when he was locked in. She presently revisited his dungeon, though not officially, to ask him, through the air-hole in the door, if he would like another lump of sugar. But there was a change. He was beginning to be that most abject thing on earth, a sot whose Dutch courage, Dutch friendship, Dutch faith, hope, and charity, are passing off. The singing had ceased; the voice within was one of weeping and lamentation. He was the victim now. He maundered over his sorrows, the injustice of the world to lowly merit, his desertion by his friends. He had been his own worst enemy, but only in being too good, too considerate, too helpful toward the human race.

The woman, who could have passed a competitive examination in all the symptoms, withdrew without another word.

Left sniveling—perhaps over the thought of a motherland drowning, not even in malmsey, but in swipes.

XXXIV



HE next day brought the visit of the royal pair to a close. They left on Monday, with the same ceremony as before, and with an air of benignant weariness. The Points breathed once more, and fresh arrivals added a reinforcement to their ranks. It seemed like old times again. The Square-Toed age could not have lasted; really distinguished persons were beginning to yawn. The castle wore an unmistakable air of high spirits. The joy of living began to dispute the empire of sensation with the mere pious opinion of the certainty of death.

There was a check, though—not to say a chill. The public scene was not altogether what it should be. The war dragged on, the government still cried for more men, and the occasional obligation of mourning left the whole scheme of gaiety at the mercy of the accidents of a guerrilla campaign.

With this came matter of still more serious concern in the illness of the sovereign. It was nothing; yet, at her age, anything might give cause for anxiety. There was a consequent damping down of the fires of excitement, no more. A house-party is not easily robbed of its rights.

The Yellow Van

"Guess what we 've been doing all this afternoon," said Mary Liddicot to Arthur Gooding, who was taking her in to dinner.

"Making mittens for the soldiers."

"Don't be absurd. Playing bridge."

"Don't take a mean advantage: I dare n't echo the reproof."

"Where 's the absurdity? Everybody does it. Lady Felicia Rawton is simply mad about it."

"And a matron of four-and-twenty—fie!"

"She and Di and Twiggy Penstone had a compartment to themselves, and played all the way down in the train."

"We seem to want a foot-note about 'Di,' " said the youth.

"Oh, Di, from 'Diamond cut diamond.' Muriel Paryngton 's so sharp. Have n't you that sort of thing among men? They used to call Tom—"

"And may I trouble you for 'Twiggy'?"

"Never mind all that. It 's a most fascinating game."

"Mind you don't win all their money. But I suppose you only play for hair-pins."

"What do you take us for—babies?"

"Not all of you, upon my sacred honor."

"Real coin of the realm, if you please. Sixpenny points sometimes."

"Sorry for somebody—don't know for which one just yet, some of you look so clever at the game."

"Nonsense: it 's nearly all luck and—what 's your funny American word for it?—bluff: being cheeky,

you know, not being afraid. And as for excitement, well—whist with your blood running cold."

"No wonder I could n't find you after luncheon."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Can the grave?"

"It was a girls' party in Lady Felicia's room. She chaperons Di and Twiggy. She 's not my chaperon, you know; I belong to Augusta. But don't you dare say a word to *her*."

"And they offered to take you in. I see."

"I wonder if you mean anything ill-natured. Anyhow, I 'm going to drop the subject. What a fine day for the time of year!"

He took the rebuke in good part, and, on his return to the drawing-room, discreetly avoided not only the topic but Mary herself. In fact, he sought the shelter of a tropical plant, and sat idly toying with an album of views of Allonby, and sometimes surveying the party over the edge of the cover.

Lady Felicia found him out, for all that. She was a handsome young woman,—a sort of creature of polished steel, all compact, in physique and in manner,—a mighty huntress, but showing traces of the abuse of violent exercise in an unnatural flush of cheek and fire of eye; for the rest, as cold and hard as a bar of Bessemer.

"The oracle in his cave," she said, with a smile.

"No; only the hermit, at worst."

"What 's wrong with Lake Shore?" she said abruptly. "They seem to have a fit of the jumps."

Arthur found it hard to avoid these questions

now that his reputation was established as the agent of a trust. He was supposed to know all about everything in the way of getting rich.

"I 'm afraid they 're out of my line," he said.

"I know what that means: 'Don't bother me tonight.' Never mind; perhaps you 'll be more compassionate to-morrow."

She returned to the lounge on which she had left her two charges. One of these, Muriel Paryngton, Lord Paryngton's daughter, a girl as tall and well knit as her protectress, had an extraordinary repose of bearing, an effect of nature not unassisted by art. The other, Ethel Penstone, was a little creature whose dark eyes and languorous vivacity of manner gave her an exotic charm.

Mary joined them presently, and, after chatting awhile, they withdrew, one by one, as though to their rooms.

"They 're going to play bridge with that chicken," said Arthur to himself; "and I think I 'm going to sit up till they leave off."

The four were in Lady Felicia's sitting-room now. The maids were dismissed for the night, all but Felicia's, a discreet hand of middle age whom nothing could scare. Then, almost without a word wasted on small talk, the game began. The luck of the cut paired Mary with the hostess, and Twiggy with Muriel, for the first game.

"Penny points?" said Felicia, with a cold smile to her partner. "You 're no novice now."

At the end of half an hour Mary was the richer

by a couple of pounds. It was a new experience for her, the winning of money worth the count, and it had a fascination of its own. Her father had been almost her only antagonist at cards, and her contests with him had rarely left her the better or worse by more than a florin. But forty shillings! It was like a beginning of income. First earnings always mark a new epoch in life.

"Look at it!" she laughed.

"Millionaire soon, at this rate," said Muriel.

Then there were ups and downs; and Polly blundered, and Di—for they became all nicknames now—bit her lip, and "Fliss" laughingly said, "Better luck next time," and Twiggy, whose mother owned mines in Bilbao, alone seemed unaware that anything had happened either way.

Finally, with a serious change in the luck, poor Polly lost all her winnings and something more in a single deal.

"I think I 'll go to bed now," she said.

"Try a change of partners and sixpenny points," said Lady Felicia, dryly. "It may change the luck. We can book it, you know, Polly. Di 's the clearing-house; and we 'll settle up at the end."

"Change packs, too, while we 're about it," said Muriel. She swept the two in play to the floor, where they lay like so much wreckage of the woods, and drew fresh ones from a neat morocco box stamped with her monogram. Whatever else was not in that honorable young person's luggage, this was never left behind. It was an object of even greater anxiety to her maid than the jewel-case.

Mary mated with Ethel Penstone this time, Muriel as dealer, and—sixpenny points.

Ethel shuffled. It was a pretty sight. Her effortless fingers simply shed the cards; and it was really difficult to regard these as the devil's playthings while they dropped so gracefully from the direction of the sky. The very rhythm in their slight rustle over the polished surfaces was music of a kind. The bared white arm was quite motionless; only the wrist moved, and that almost imperceptibly but for a point of light in her diamond bracelet that rose and fell with an even beat.

They examined their cards, their brows, smooth or troubled, marking degrees of proficiency in the game. Mary pursued her studies with a frown.

Muriel, as dealer, had the right to decide on the trump suit; but she passed it on to Lady Felicia, with the formula: "Partner, I 'll leave it to you."

Felicia having made her choice, the initiative in raising the value of the stakes came to Ethel as leader. She decided to double, so the points became shilling ones at a stroke. Mary checked herself in futile dissent with a gasp. The next moment she was all aglow with the gambler's everlasting hope of a miracle.

The charm of this delightful game is that the stake, big or little, has the illusory nature of all matter in the best philosophic systems. It is a single grain of sand at one moment; at another, by doubling and redoubling at the will of individual players, it becomes a whole Sahara.

Ethel led, with an engaging indifference to results which marked her proceedings from first to last. Felicia, becoming ex-officio dummy as partner of the dealer, exposed her hand on the table and simply watched the game. If Mary had been able to look up, she might have found a sort of terror in the steely eyes. The watcher's interests, however, were in excellent keeping, for dummy's hand was played by Muriel.

It was a scene of strange contrasts, the old and the new. The players, with their charm of age and sex and evening toilets, sat in a turret-chamber with walls a yard thick, glowing in the electric light. The middle ages had blinked and shivered here in the glare of pine torches stuck in the wall, in the fitful warmth of log fires with the open casement for their chimney, and in breezes that sometimes inflated the tapestry like a balloon. There was tapestry still, but it was only part of a decorative scheme, of which innumerable curios in the precious metals, and trifles of every imaginable description in hardly less precious fancy leather, with bronzes, water-colors, sofas, rugs, skins of the chase, and a heavy Persian carpet as a welcome substitute for green rushes, formed the details.

But the strangest contrast was in the young women themselves. The stern game unsexed them, and they became as hard as men in the like condition. They were playing for money,—playing for an income, in the case of Muriel,—and they took on the fierce, relentless manner of all who are fight-



ing for life. The environment is everything. Put Milton's Eve at the pit mouth, to which so many of her daughters have drifted, and softness and sweet attractive grace will no longer be her distinguishing charm. Give the Dorothea of Cervantes a tough hand to play for her bread and butter, or at any rate for her pins, and she will have the characteristics, if not exactly the manners, of the betting-ring. They were hard and curt in question and answer, with scant consideration for one another's little weaknesses and little ways. Man, the idealizer, might have been troubled had he heard and seen. Arthur Gooding kept the chamber under observation from his window in a rectangular wing. It was lucky that nothing more reached him than a ray of light from the chink of a curtain imperfectly closed.

XXXV

PAST one o'clock and a cloudy morning, and ten minutes for refreshment. They rose, stretched themselves. Felicia sent for her dressing-gown, and her maid, on returning with it, noiselessly mended the fire, so as to cause no scandal to a house at rest. She then put cigarettes on the table, with tea, and waters weak and strong—the latter in the form of cognac from her ladyship's dressing-case. They chatted awhile, chiefly in slang and nicknames—all but Mary, who was now forty pounds to the bad. She was ready to run for it in sheer terror, but she was held back by two considerations—the fear of ridicule, the forlorn hope of recovering her losses.

Play resumed, but with no change of partners, the victors having generously offered the others their revenge. The house is fast asleep, save perhaps for the distant smoking-room, where Tom Penniquicke and his cronies still take up their wondrous tale of the shortcomings of their order. His subject to-night is the scandal of the card-table in great houses. The best and the worst of all talk is not so much what is said as what is assumed. The thing assumed here is the cancerous corruption of a section of society—the matron ready to pay in kind the

gambling debts she is unable to pay in specie; the girl held in pawn by the profligate with the dread of exposure.

Mr. Gooding, no longer cheered, or rather tormented, by the wandering ray, turns in, under the delusive belief that the sitting is at an end. He is much mistaken. They are at two-shilling points now. Mary owes sixty pounds, and is ready for anything, in her desperate desire to recover herself.

Has her chance come? Muriel deals her a capital hand in hearts—king, jack, nine, and smaller fry, with equally fair cards of other suits; and, at the same time, declares hearts for the trump.

Ethel declines to double, but passes it on to her partner. Now is the time for the manœuver by which Mary herself has been so heavily hit.

She doubles.

Muriel redoubles as calmly as if she were taking a stroke at croquet.

Mary hopes that none may hear her heart beat under the shock of surprise; but it is all or nothing now. She redoubles.

Then they close for the shock of battle.

Ethel, by way of great response to her partner's suggestion of great strength in trumps, leads out her single heart.

Alas! the strong man holdeth only on a well-known condition. Muriel, by the sheer luck of the deal, has a still better hand than Mary, and, with ace, queen, ten, and other trumps at command, is able promptly to put the lead into dummy's hand.

It is the Sedan of poor Mary's plan of campaign, not ill devised as it was on the ordinary calculation of chances.

Dummy leads hearts, and Muriel is able to "sit over" Mary every time.

When a conflict has reached this stage, the humane spectator withdraws. No one cares to look on sheer butchery.

Mary makes no count in trumps, and finally loses four tricks, counting sixty-four each, on a score already working out at something over a thousand.

Her total loss now stands at one hundred and fifty pounds.

The game is over; the dawn will be here soon. They rise for leave-taking, but not so hurriedly as to preclude a kiss all round.

Gamblers are rarely nice to look at after an all-night sitting, and these young people are no exception to the rule. They are the mere wreckage of the stately order in which they entered the arena yesterday for their triumphs of the drawing-room. Their hair is a tangle of shreds of coiffure; their eyes are lusterless and rimmed with the stains of fatigue; their lips are dry. Toilets that were studied compositions in the carelessness of art are now all astray in the muddle of mere untidiness. Their unwashed hands have sought brow and cheek in the anguish of the struggle, and left their mark.

The room is even worse than its occupants. It is the room that awaits the housemaid every morning in all our houses, but aggravated in the grossness

of its effects: rugs, table-covers, all awry, soda-water bottles littering the floor, even a tumbler or two with a sediment of stale drink, stumps of cigarettes, cards crunched underfoot—in a word, disgusting, and more than ever so in its association with a sex of which refinement of habit is the essential charm. Yet the innermost misery of all is not in these things, but in the fact that girlhood has, for the first time in social history, been smirched with these revolting associations. Wicked old women have played for gain in all ages. It has been reserved for ours to admit young ones who ought to be innocent to the partnership of such unholy rites.

"Settling day to-morrow, dear, if you don't mind," whispers Lady Felicia in Mary's ear. "We 're leaving after luncheon."

It says much for Mary's innocence that she takes no thought of her trinkets in this emergency, and, in short, never once remembers that beyond an angry father may be found a placid "uncle" at need. It is but a stage, no doubt, in the experience of modern girlhood, but it is most refreshing to the beholder while it lasts.

So she gives only a feeble smile in response, rushes to her room, and, with the most shocking terrors of remorse, throws herself on her bed with "Gambler! gambler! gambler!" singing in her ears.

Arthur Gooding might almost as well have made a night of it, too, for all the comfort he had of his couch. He rose after fitful slumbers, and drew his curtains to look for dawn. It was almost broad day-

light. A cloaked female figure paced the terrace below at a rate that signified either a cold morning or a troubled mind. A single glance at the figure showed him that it was Mary, so he decided for the troubled mind. He rose, and was soon by her side.

The poor creature was in torment. She had lost what with her means and opportunities she could never recover. Her debt of honor was even more binding than any other, but how was it to be paid at short notice? Her allowance, reduced as it had voluntarily been on her part since the beginning of her father's troubles, would never suffice. The thought of the poor old man was maddening. Was she, his mainstay in trouble, to be a second Tom?

But she was brave still, and she returned the young man's greeting with composure.

"You are out early," she said. The hard, dry voice, with all the youth gone out of it, told half her tale.

"Looking for an appetite for breakfast. You haven't seen anything of the sort about?"

"If I had," she returned in the same cheerless tone, "I am afraid I should have appropriated it, for I came first."

"I surrender my claims in any case."

"Oh, I was not thinking of that at all," she said impatiently, her self-command yielding a little, in spite of her, to the appalling friction of the nerves that was going on within.

"I daren't ask questions."

She felt that she was betraying herself, and tried to change her tone.

"Well, if you want to know, I was thinking of the strangest thing in the world."

"Oh, please share the joke with a friend."

"It is n't a joke," she said, with a quickness that went straight to his heart. "It was just this: I wonder how women earn money when they happen to want to do it, you know."

"Augusta could tell you."

"Oh, but I mean quick—quick!"

"They don't play bridge with old hands," returned the youth, who saw that his moment had come. "That 's the negative of the process, anyway."

"Who told you?" she said, almost fiercely.

"Yourself."

"So *you 've* turned against me!" she cried, with trembling lip and the tears welling to her eyes.

It was unreasonable, but only the more flattering. He thought of the bank-notes in his pocket-book, and how easily, in other circumstances, a loan might settle the whole business.

"How I wish you were a man!" he said.

"Oh, say anything you like," said Mary. "I suppose I deserve it. Tell me I am lowered in your good opinion; tell me you would never have thought it of me. But remember I only began it out of bravado, and, at any rate, I 'm no worse than—"

"Than?"

"Your American girls."

"I assure you, they are not half as brave as you think."

"You know they are."

"If some of them could hear you, they might say 'Do tell!'"

"I know what you are thinking of me."

"I wonder if you do."

"You made me do it."

"I?"

"What you said about the hair-pins. I was n't going to show I was afraid before—before a foreigner. If I had been an American girl, you would have said it was all right."

"As in honor bound."

"You know they do just as they like."

"Perhaps. You see, there are so many things they don't like."

Silent misery.

"I did n't play for the money, whatever you think of me. I began just to show I was n't afraid. Then I went on to get back what I 'd lost. I 'd do that again, if I could get another chance."

"That 's the spirit and—there 's the breakfast-bell."

Lady Felicia sought him out at the meal, after her wont. "I hope you are in a kinder frame of mind this morning."

"At peace with all mankind."

"And that includes womankind?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then don't trifle; there 's a good boy." She

had the share-list in her hand, and followed one of the entries with her pencil for pointer. "They 've dropped again."

"Just like them. It 's an uncertain game. Why not stick to bridge, Lady Felicia?"

She laughed uneasily, and looked at him, still smiling, but with a world of mischief in her eye.

"She 's told you."

"I 've found out."

"Telling is n't the ethics of the game."

"Oh, the moment you bring ethics into it, where are we? All sorts of questions may arise: players of approved strength against weaklings; a chaperon with young girls in her charge; perhaps even the obligations of guest to host in a strange house."

"It was all fair—the luck of the game."

"Bridge is not a gamble, Lady Felicia; if it were, that would only make the case worse."

"It is like the great game, life itself," she said: "the best wins."

"That 's just it: the best head. The deal is only the accident of birth. With two such players as Lady Felicia and Miss Paryngton, invocations to Fortune would be all thrown away."

"Muriel 's not such a wonder," she said; "it 's only that Mary 's such a child."

"That 's just it again—such a child."

"It will be a lesson for her."

"I am afraid the duke would hardly like to think of her receiving the lesson at Allonby."

"Is it a threat?"

"By no means; only a warning."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Only to play the game, Lady Felicia."

This time her ladyship cowered beneath his gaze.

He saw nothing of Mary, or of any of them, till luncheon, and then the whole scene had changed. The girl was radiant.

"We 've been playing all the morning," she said, —"same partners. They would have me in,—was n't it nice of them?—and I 've won it all back but twenty pounds."

"I should stop there," said the youth, "and put up my votive tablet at once."

"Only too happy," she said. "But you were wrong. I told you it was all luck. I seemed to win hand over hand. Even Muriel was stupid; and I never saw Felicia play so badly. Will you own you were all wrong, and make it up?"

"I 'll own anything, now that you 're all right," he said.

Felicia winged a rankling shaft as she took her leave. "Lucky Mary, with a friend who threatens to tell!" she whispered with the parting kiss.

They were still at the hall door when a groom came in sight. He was from Liddicot, and the bearer of a scrawl from her father:

"For God's sake, Polly, come home at once!"

"What is it?" she faltered.

"News from Mr. Tom, miss. But don't you take on; he 's only wounded."

The Yellow Van

It was the last straw. With the strangest little upward look and smile, as of deprecation of fresh trouble, she fainted.

ANOTHER and a far more dreadful message of doom was to come next day to Allonby, to all England, and to all the Britains. The last of the Points were leaving the castle, still on their endless round of pleasure, when even they were startled by the thunderclap of the Queen's death. They seemed to fall apart from one another under the shock, and to be converted in a moment from a band of revelers in full cry into a flying crowd of phantoms scattering before the presence of a great reality. The flag fell half-mast at the castle, and with sorrow in the household, sorrow in the state, the great bell tolled the end of an epoch. For such it was, whatever else was to come for the Queen's realm in the providence of God.

XXXVI



ONG after her recovery of consciousness, Mary remained in a state of partial collapse. Her trials had increased her tenderness for both her kin, and her remorse for her conduct to her father. The escapade at the card-table had now adjusted itself to conscience as a wanton betrayal of the old man. She was going to bring down his gray hairs in sorrow by increasing his embarrassments. In this state, of course, she was ready to believe the worst against herself. She was the wicked child. Poor Tom could not help his extravagance: it was the Service. But what excuse had she? Alas! for an ancient house that must find its doom in the follies of a girl.

So what fitter than that the worst should fall on her as a punishment? It was the hand of Providence: the very date of her brother's wound was the very one on which she had first sat down to the detested game. On the night of her vigil he was perhaps groaning out his life on the veldt. For Tom was going to die, and to be buried, far from all of them, in a foreign grave. It was horrible to think that at this very moment he might be lying under the turf of a Boer farm, like a dead horse. Brought up as she had been, Mary naturally cherished the

proprieties of consecrated ground, British soil, and the family sepulchre.

In all this she had taken Mr. Gooding into her confidence. He was her strong man and keeper, and she had gradually learned to look to him from the men of her house. The sense of her debt to him for deliverance from her late trouble had come upon her in a flash as the hidden meaning of Lady Felicia's parting sneer: "Luck Mary, with a friend who threatens to tell!"—what could it be but that he had forced them to give her another chance. And her fatuous offer of pardon, if he would confess himself in the wrong—she could have humbled herself with stripes.

He knew all that was passing in her mind, and was as "innocent" as ever when her confidences were offered once more. He saw that she was on the brink of some desperate resolution—perhaps a journey to South Africa to find Tom, and to bring him back, dead or alive. And when he forestalled it by quietly announcing that business might take him to that part of the world, and that, in fact, he was starting next day, she could have knelt and kissed his hand. Not a single pledge was asked or offered as to his interest in the fate of the wounded man, but the words seemed to give her troubled spirit a foretaste of the great peace. She did not even thank him, while he resolutely talked gold-mines until he bade her and the squire good-by. She returned his pressure of the hand, but she said nothing.

Augusta was to have accompanied him to town on her own quest for the Herions, but she was still detained by the disarray of all the family plans. She chafed in her bondage of letters to write, orders to countermand, all the endless detail of the life of rank. The family was like a great ship, hard to start in any new course, but just as hard to stop when once under way. Custom and usage decreed three weeks longer in the country; and the mistress of Allonby could only contrive to get a week to the good by finally breaking her way out of a coil of red tape. One morning, when her bonds had become intolerable, she brushed all her letters aside unopened, ordered her carriage for the next train, and by the afternoon was in town, with the duke to follow as soon as his own servants gave him leave.

Her first experience was disheartening. It was all failure, and it humbled her into a sort of charity for the lawyers and the detectives. The terrible obscurity of the outcasts was the stumbling-block. One can hardly conceive the anonymity of London poverty. It is mere nothingness; the absolute of the unconsidered trifle. Often it still labors toward the patronymic from the mere nickname, and knows a man only as "Squinteye," as one of his betters might have been known centuries ago as "Longshanks." Most of the persons whose addresses Mr. Gooding had so carefully noted on his quest were now themselves on a lost trail—atoms floating in the void. One was in Hades.

But a single thing was unchanged—the slum

owned by the Duke of Allonby. Augusta had at length heard of that grim incident of her brother's earlier journey. She went to see the place now, partly for her immediate purpose, partly to peep into the Bluebeard's chamber of the ducal estate. There it was—even to the blood in its dismal implications. Oh! And this was the hotbed of human remains wherefrom, in part, the vigor of a noble house derived its sap. It was not exactly the duke's fault; so much she had learned in answer to her eager inquiries. The houses were leased; they had been misused by the tenants; they were to be torn down and rebuilt as soon as opportunity served. Yet nothing could altogether remove the stain of their associations from the greatness of Allonby.

So passed weeks in idle and, at times, almost aimless activities without result. Sometimes Augusta turned from her search to her charities, in the endeavor to hearten herself up with the thought that she was still of some use in the world. One day she went down to the London Hospital, that vast lazarhouse of the East End, and wandered from her ward there to the others, through what seemed to be miles of pain, this time, thank Heaven, not unrelieved. It lay quiet, for the most part, gazing upward in mute resignation, perhaps in hope of what lay beyond to the farthest cry. Here, if anywhere, should there be painted ceilings, not in the halls of humanity on the perpendicular. Hardly a moan broke the stillness, but lack-lustre eyes attested the weariness of the prospect and the longing for change.

One case was especially touching in its mute resignation. An emaciated man, lying like a mummy in his bandages, gazed steadily upward with the others. The whole attitude had a sort of rigidity of death about it, even to the fixity of the stare. The fear that he might actually have passed away made her pause to look at him. And, as she looked, there came a great awe upon her, for she knew at once that what she saw was what she had so long sought. That certainty came in a way she could not define—by a something in the expression that we carry with us, almost from the cradle to the grave—perhaps from the cradle itself, to one beholder.

Yet still she lingered dubiously to disentangle the image from a sort of debris of youth and premature age. The old fire was in the upturned eyes, ever only less bright than those of the king of his order, the peasant Burns. But the hair was now gray, and it hung in wisps instead of the old swaths. The cheek had the yellow unbleached whiteness of the bedclothes, and the whole face was modeled mainly in its lines of bone.

"George—George Herion—don't you know me?"

He gave a convulsive start, turned his head in a fierce, resentful stare, then tried to swing head and body away from her, with the help of one disengaged arm.

The whole ward was now in movement with the sense of something coming to pass.

A nurse ran up, as though to chide her patient, but forbore when she saw the great lady holding his

hand. Still, she shook her head, and placed a finger to her lips.

Augusta mastered herself with an effort, but a gleam of triumph blended with the pity of her eyes. "When may I come to talk to him?" she said.

"To-morrow, I hope, your Grace. At any rate, we 'll do the best we can. Accident, and a bad case; we 've had to move him like so much biscuit china for weeks and weeks."

Found at last! Yet still she dared not make sure of it without reading his bed-card—"George Herion." So the long, long search was at an end.

There was another surprise for her when she reached home—a telegram from Southampton:

"Landed Tom Liddicot this morning. Take him home to-morrow. Voyage done wonders; almost out of danger now. ARTHUR."

A fruitful day at last.

XXXVII



HEY took Tom down to Liddicot, and Mr. Gooding never left him till he had seen him safely over the moat. The invalid could walk with assistance, and he was evidently on the mend. The flesh-tones wanted freshening where the tan had yielded to the pale underlying tint that seems to be nature's first start with us all.

Father and daughter were both waiting, as on the day of Augusta's visit; but Mr. Gooding was for hurrying away on further "business" when he had delivered up his charge. The old man would not have it so until he had made some attempt to express his thanks. He was naturally able to say rather less than usual, and, in consequence, began to meditate an invitation to dinner as a sort of discharge in full of all demands. A word from Mary put an end to that.

As for her, feeling that she could say nothing, she wisely said it, and, with a downcast look that derived its sole significance from the wit of the interpreter, suffered the young fellow to take his leave.

For the story of how the hero was found they had to rely on his soldier-servant, who came home with

him, and who had joined the service as a lad from the estate. By the general consent of the servants' hall he was a smart fellow, much improved in speech and manners by travel, and particularly by garrison duties in town. The girls listened to his tale for the teller's sake; and Mary's maid brought it to the dressing-room, in due course, whence her mistress took it to the study fire.

The wounded man, though perfectly able to talk, and rapidly recovering, had the same constitutional incapacity for narrative as his sire. It was not precisely modesty; it was rather a horror of the sequence of ideas, as a form of "bookiness" unworthy of a sportsman. Indeed, Tom himself referred Mary to his dependent, as to a person who had no uneasiness on this point. "Don't bother, Polly; there 's a dear. Tell Parker to make Sam turn on the tap."

And Sam did full justice to his subject; or, where he failed, the maid in reporting him supplied the finishing touches.

"What I can never get over," he said to his cronies, "is that these Boer chaps are just the same as you or me: farmin' fellows, most of 'em, livin' on the land, an' by it, too, though they get the pull on us with their blacks. Stock-raisin' most of the time: the cattle darkenin' the land in the great drives. And, you might n't think it, but all sorts of things in their houses—photygraphs, Bibles, an' what not, just as it might be 'ere.

"What a rummy sort o' thing war is! Travel thousands o' miles to find you 've got a quarrel with

somebody that 's just such another as yourself. Great stretches o' salt sea, an' dark night, an' winds howlin' all around; an' there you are push, push, pushin' on to get at the man you was fated to kill from your cradle. Goodness! it seems like havin' a row with the next world. But there you find the quarrel waitin' for you, manner o' speakin', when you land. The flags and the mottoes and the music is all the news you get of it at first, and it takes many a mile of footin', heel an' toe, before you see an enemy's face. And not that all at once, mind you. At first all you have to put up with, for a long time, is little specks, nigh a mile off; but you know they want to kill you, and you got to kill them. *Pop! pop!* and p'r'aps no one much the worse for it, but it 's rummy all the same. You feel you could go over and ask 'em what 's the trouble, an' settle it there an' then.

"Close quarters is the rummiest of all. Now you see the eyes o' your man, an' the color in his cheeks; an' you got to do him, or he 'll do you. Of course, if he 's comin' straight for you, you put off thinkin' about it till you 've laid him out. But if you 're dodging about, dismounted, p'r'aps, an' sparrin' for an openin', for the life o' you, you can hardly help singin' out, 'Hold on!'

"That sort o' thing came to me one day. I was scoutin', advance line, over rough country; great big stones (copies, they call 'em there), when from behind one of 'em up jumps a feller not ten yards off. It was such a surprise for both of us that we

clean forgot to shoot. We just stared each other straight in the face—almost rude, as they used to call it when I was a kid. By —— sir! we knew what was in each other's mind, without a word. We 'd got to kill at short notice, an' we could n't begin for shame.

"I dropped mine; his never stirred from the stone where it was restin'. 'It 's a fine day,' says he, in English, 'fur the time o' year.'

"After that, believe me, I could n't have let fly at him if he 'd asked me to. All I could manage was: 'Same to you, rebel; same to you. How are you gettin' on?'

" 'Pretty fair,' he said, 'but I could do with a bit o' fresh meat. An' you don't happen to have such a thing as a pipe-light?'

" 'Happy to oblige'; an' I tossed him a box o' blazers. 'Take half, an' kindly return balance, if you please.'

" 'How d' you pick up a livin,' said the rebel, 'when you ain't at this work?'

" 'Hosses.'

" 'Just my line. 'Scuse me, but you 're a trifle too far ahead of your lot; we 're workin' round your flank.'

"Just then the bugle sounded for us to fall back.

" 'Don't hurry,' he said, 'only keep on your hands an' knees. Creep round this way, an' I 'll stand a drink.'

"Awful stuff it was; yet, takin' one thing with another, toothsome, too.

"'I 'm a Burghersdorp man,' says my mate—for that 's what it had come to by this time. 'If you happen to be round that way when this is over, look me up, an' it 'll be your turn to stand treat. If I ain't in, don't bother. See you p'r'aps in the next world. Anyway, pass a drop o' water to one of our wounded, an' I 'll cry quits wherever I may be.'

"'Give us your fist.' An' we gripped behind the stone. Take my oath, it was just like sayin' prayers, kneelin' an' all.

"Then the bugle sung out again, an' we crept back; an' that was the last of him.

"Rummy like, if you come to think of it! But that 's life, if it ain't exactly war. An' it was war again a moment after, for I passed one or two stiff uns on the way to camp.

"Less than a week after that Mr. Tom was bowled over. A good feller, but a babby at this sort o' game. Cavalry to cover advance, and he trotted them right into a trap you might have seen a mile off. Trotted up to it, an' trotted into it, sir; and when we got nicely in the middle, they let fly from three sides an' downed him an' fifteen others. Lord! how our fellers swore at him till we got 'em into hospital—them as was able to return thanks. English gentry are all right: you could n't get killed in better company. That 's the use of old families, I fancy, in a country like ours—figureheads. The city people are sharp enough; an' see how they work 'em in—boards an' such like: others to do the schemin' work.

"'I 'm done, Sam,' he said to me. An', sure enough, it looked a case. Mauser bullet right through the stomach, front to back. Well, the moment he got it he begins to be a sportsman again, artful as they make 'em, workin' with his head-piece to save his men. The way he got that troop under cover was a caution, an' the hole in him all the time, mind. Stuck to it till he fainted; and then the lot of us did a bunk to the rear, wounded an' all. They pulled him about a bit in the ambulance, an' he fainted again an' again. But as soon as he came to for good, he went on workin' with his head-piece, an' saved 'imself, spite o' the doctors.

"How did he do it? Livin' on his fat. You don't understand? How should you? Well, this way:

"'I 'm hit through the intestines,' thinks he—'a clean wound. If I don't give my inside any work to do for a week, the wound may heal of itself.'

"Lord, he can be downy when he takes the trouble. So he lies there, still 's a mouse, six mortal days an' nights without bite or sup. Hardly a word all the time, even to me, but gives his orders with his eyes. I wetted his lips now an' then with brandy an' water; that was all. He reckoned he 'd got fat enough to keep him without nourishment, an' he was right. In a manner o' speakin', his fat was his good works, an' he fell back on 'em. By the time he could n't hold out longer, the wound was healed. Then the young American gent comes with all the delicacies o' the season in a hand-bag, and he begins

to pick a bit. The sea-breezes do the rest, an'—here we are. Come to think of it, that 's a sort of idea as might do for other things in life, if a chap could work it out. Save all the fat you can, an' live on it when the pinch comes." He was evidently wrestling with the conception that even virtue is only another kind of fat; but the expression of it was beyond his powers.

The squire's heart melted toward the man who had helped to save his son. He had hitherto had his suspicions of Arthur Gooding, and naturally, for the latter was still something "un-English," all said and done.

He was quite frank about it. "We 've only been acquaintance up to this time, sir," he said; "my fault. I wish we may be friends. You 're a man."

"We have to begin that as early as we can," said Mr. Gooding, "else we get left."

"I should like to know more of you, sir," added the squire, in a penitential tone.

"It 's soon told. We 're older acquaintances, Sir Henry, if not older friends, than you think. My grandfather hoed turnips on one of your father's farms."

"Gooding? Gooding?" said the old man. "Can't say I remember— What, Jack Gooding, big Jack, that used to—oh, Lord!"

"No doubt. It was news to all of us till the other day, when my uncle over yonder turned up a bundle of old letters."

"Big Jack Gooding," repeated the squire. "Well,



well! I don't remember his going away,—I was at Cambridge, then,—but I perfectly well remember missing him."

"Yes, sir, it 's all down in the letters. There was no chance for him here, so he left to the tune of 'To the West,'—the hymn, I should like to call it, that peopled America. He sought his chance of a larger life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and found all three. Here they keep the openings so much in the family, and he could n't wait. If he 'd stayed he might have been Skett at the best; at the worst—perhaps George Herion."

The squire looked argumentative, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

"He made a fresh start in a village on our side. But there are villages and villages; and that one was panting to make itself a township, and found nobody to say nay. Then it took a fancy to be a city, and still there was no denial; and a city it is to this day. My grandfather owned half of it; I don't say that 's exactly the highest ideal of humanity, but while it 's a mere scramble, why not he as well as the next man? There was none to bar him because of his birth or his breeding, or to set up the claim of a scutcheon against the claim of native wit. Besides, it all righted itself pretty soon. My father lost it in the virtuous attempt to corral the other half; and so we all had to begin again. It 's capital exercise; and I 'm going home by to-morrow's boat for my share. That 's what I came to say."

"Give me your hand," said the squire. "We seem to have got it all wrong here somehow."

"Make it a leave-taking, sir, for the present, and give my respectful compliments to Miss Mary. I could not trust myself to thank either of you in set terms for all the hospitality and all the kindness I have found at Liddicot."

XXXVIII



UGUSTA went early to the hospital, on the day after she had found George.

She had at first to sue for his story as for a favor. His sullen wrath against Allonby Castle and all its works and workers knew no distinction of persons. He had been hit from its towers: what mattered the hand or the loophole. Allonby had driven him out, if London had laid him low. The agent was but another name for the duke; the duke, for the duchess; and he hated them all. It was a last touch of pride and defiance that bound him to life.

For Augusta this was all so entirely natural that she had no thought of anger or rebuke. It was his cry for vengeance; he wanted her to feel that she had come too late to save the broken thing at her feet. And vengeance was sensation, and sensation was life.

"I 'm done, lady," he said sullenly. "We 'll get it over soon 's may be, if you doan' mind."

"How did it happen, Herion?"

"Gentlefolks—ask them."

"Poor fellow! Give me a better answer if you can—for the sake of others."

"Sake of others! If she was 'ere, she would n't want to see the color of your eyes. What 's done 's done; why make more 'eartbreaks for 'er 'n' me."

"But if only you had written!"

It seemed to rouse him to fury. "What was there to write? That a man turned out of a village at short notice comes to town to starve? Who give all of us to all of you? I only wanted to stand on my own feet, and be a man. Slocum's mine much as yours. We been there long as anybody, I dare say, if we ain't got writin's to show for it—longer than some."

"How did it happen, Herion?"

"The nuss knows," he muttered. "I got no stomach for the tale."

"I want you to tell me."

"Fell down the 'old of a ship—so Allonby's got the laugh, after all."

"Allonby won't get much of a laugh out of it, Herion. But never mind that; all your stubbornness and all your pride won't prevent me from doing something to help you."

"I won't 'ave your 'elp, duchess. As for 'er, I tell you, she would n't—ah, God forgive me! an' she 's wearin' her fingers to the bone to keep her babby alive." The hot tears coursed down his cheeks. "Now you 're the winner; my sperrit 's broke."

A sickening and, at the same time, an awful change. The thought of Rose had brought on him a full sense of the terror of the forces arrayed against the "likes of him"—Allonby, and beyond that,

Heaven's throne and Heaven's judgments—the Heaven of Mr. Raif! It was a reversion to the fears of infancy. He was the peasant child again, the peasant Sunday scholar, with submission at the very heart of him, and the sense of fate.

"Tell me all. And will you try to believe you are telling it to a friend?" She took the lean and clammy hand.

He was quite humble now. "Anything you like; only get it over soon 's you can, if you 're a merciful woman."

"I 'd ha' put by something," he added apologetically, "an' made a start, if the dock work had lasted. When it stopped all of a sudden, I was broke."

"And then?"

"Then the babby. Come to think of it, a laborin' man 's no bezness with anything o' that sort, if he ain't in full work. I 've heared Mester Raif say so many a time; an' it 's reet."

"Never mind Mr. Raif."

"It 's the sties some of 'em 'ave to get born in, up in the big towns; an' 'unted from sty to sty to that. It breaks the 'eart of a man, aye, an' the 'eart of a woman, what 's stronger still.

"But I was n't done yet, mind. You must n't think, duchess, I was done so easy 's that. I tramped the county for seven weeks, an' I got a bit o' 'arvestin', an' kept things goin', and brought back three pound knotted in my 'ankercher to live on while I waited for another chance at the docks.

"Then the devil got the pull on me again. Three thick uns, all in gold, 'll go a long way, but they won't last forever. When they got low, I used to go an' 'ear the talkin' Sundays at Mile End Waste."

"The outdoor preaching?"

"Not much o' that," he said, with a bitter laugh. "Anarshists—that 's what they call theirselves. It make me feel I 'd rather die than go back to Allonby. Put yourself in my place: touch your 'at to the gentry, touch it to the parson. Always under somebody's eye: church, Sundays, under one overseer, 'oliday sports under another. Coals and blankits if you behave yourself. Dyin' even under the eye o' your betters. I ain't got 's fur as that yet, and doan' mean to, if the pieces 'll stick together. Still, duchess, if I 'ad come to it, 'ere you are." He laughed at his own conceit.

"'Ow a man sometimes do feel 'shamed of it—aye, an' a woman more! All the glory alleluia o' life for the gentry, an' the leavin's for us! We got our thoughts. You see, duchess, I got rebellious-like—all foolishness; I see it now."

"Oh, for God's sake, Herion, be rebellious still!" she flashed.

His resignation was much harder for her to bear than his defiance. In her soul she was ready to honor him for his refusal to yield. She, too, was reverting to her earlier self, the American girl, whose part as duchess had shrunk to the insignificance of a scene of comedy. Her innermost sympathy was for the rebel against the castle, and against all the

assumptions of her own fantastic ideal at Allonby. The relation between village and castle was radically false. Nothing could be done in actual life either for or with these figures of Arcady, as unreal as their prototypes of an Elizabethan masque. But her anger was less against him than against herself. She had tried to accept a convention that she knew to be a fable before experience had shown it to be a lie. Here was the miserable proof in this poor, maimed thing—maimed even more seriously in spirit than in body for the battle of life. The system of feudal dependence did not rear men, and was not meant to rear them. It was perhaps no part of her duty to change it, since she was without the power; but she might have let it alone.

"Try it on our chances," was all he said.

"When the dock work began again, lady, I was too greedy at it. Went at it like a famishin' man at 'is victuals, for victuals it was. The very fust day I was trippin' over a plank stretched across a 'old,—trippin' for joy, like, an' we both put too much spring in it, me an' the plank together, an' it chucked me clean up in the air. I could n't ha' been long gettin' down, but I 'd time to think of Slocum, an' my old mother, and Rose, and the child, before I touched bottom with the flat o' my back. Aye, an' more, too. Funny as it seem, I fancied along with all that as I was a penny on the toss, an' that it was boun' to finish me whether I come down 'ead or tail. Then a thud, with not a bit o' pain in it,

that put me to sleep for four days, till I woke up 'ere."

He stopped as though he expected some defense of the providential order; but the duchess said never a word.

"They riveted me together—never mind that. But they can't move me, and 'ere I 've laid ever sence. When I come to she was at the bedside. 'Doan' you worry, boy,' she whispers, bendin' over me. 'I 've got work—lots of it—washin'; an' 'ired a mangle. Can't go at it fast enough. But I got time for babby, all the same, so there 's more washin' to do when the other 's done, an' it 's 'im that comes last of all. Then I kiss 'is little pink body all over, an' put him to bed, an' say my prayers over him. It 's only a short prayer, boy, but it 's a good un, for it 's got to last me all the twenty-four hours. An' 'e sends 'is love to father, an'—an'—' Oh!"

He hid his face with the disengaged arm, that moved in one piece like a semaphore, and Augusta hid hers.

"That went on for weeks an' weeks, and me layin' 'ere all the while. Then one day she come, just same as usual, but she would n't give me 'er 'and when I feel for it; an' when she gave it, it was the left. Then I stuck out for the other, an' found it done up like a dolly under 'er shawl. Crushed in the mangle! Too eager about it, I s'pose—my fault over again. It drawed 'er finger in, like, when she 'appened to turn 'er 'ead to chirrup to the kid in the cot.

" 'No pain, boy,' she says, 'till I put it under the tap to stop the bleedin', an' nearly well again now.'

"No pain! Ten times wuss than anything as had 'appened to me, if you measure it by the square inch.

" 'Rose,' I said, 'we got to give in, my dear. Write a letter to Allonby. God A'mighty 's lookin' the other way.'

" 'Not yet, boy. I can do beautiful by leanin' my wrist ag'in' the side o' the tub. Got all the washin' 'ome Monday, jest the same 's before.'

"But 'ow could I 'elp seeing it? Faster 'n I got better, she was gettin' worse."

"Where is she?" cried Augusta, impatiently, and reverting even to the peculiarities of idiom. "I 've got to see that woman right away."

"It 's visitin' day," he said, "an' she may be 'ere any moment. She might be 'ere now."

"Go on, then."

"Weeks an' weeks more, an' me still 'ere. An' one day she come in all smilin', an' when I take 'er left 'and, same 's before, she laughs. 'Where 's your manners?' she says, an' draws it back an' lays her right hand in mine. 'Cured; an' God bless both my boys!'

"Cured! 'Ealed, if you like; but no more prizes for fine sewin' for my gal. She split her finger," he added childishly, while another tear rolled down his cheek, yet with a sluggish flow. "No cure for my Rose. She comes reg'lar very visitin' day; but the fight 's tellin' on her life: I can see that. Every time I miss somethin'—a bit o' the color from her

cheek, a bit o' the roundness from her arm. And the work done without break all this awful time. Oh, we ain't ekal to 'em, we ain't ekal to 'em! They 're nearer the next world nor we!"

Then he stopped, and a piteous trouble came on his face. "Where is she now?" he wailed. "'Alf an 'our late—never like that before! What are we chatterin' 'ere about, payin' compliments?"

Augusta could bear it no longer. "What, indeed? Tell me where she is, this instant. Or, stay"—as she saw him sink back with exhaustion; "I 'll send the nurse to you, and get it from her."

XXXIX



MOMENT more and she was hurrying on her dismal errand through the dismal streets. The very cabman was at fault in the labyrinth of squalor. But at length he found his way to a cottage standing in its own garden—such as may sometimes be seen in the most densely populated quarters. This one was evidently a relic of an earlier state of settlement, when the place was a suburb, and the cockney seeking his pleasure in the green fields paused here for his draught of milk. It had once been whitewashed, its roof had once been tiled, and the slates with which it was now covered had once been whole. Still, even in its ruin it had the waywardness of the cottage style. There was a rudimentary gable, with a pleasant confusion of angles in the ground-plan. What had been the garden was now a network of clothes-lines, with things hanging to dry. A board bore the legend: "Star Laundry. R. Herion."

Augusta knocked at the door, but there was no answer; and a second and a third summons had no better effect. Then a slatternly figure, thrust halfway out of a neighboring window, urged, "Try the back."

Augusta picked her way round to a narrow path that led to the back door. It stood wide open, and so did the first door in the narrow passage within the house. She passed through, without further ceremony, and found herself in a kind of best room, poorly furnished, but quite neat, and at present in the sole occupancy of a plump baby crowing in its cot. It was a momentary relief to what was otherwise the perfect stillness of the house. But the stillness more than held its own, until the child and a little clock, between them, seemed to be but ineffectual protests against a reign of silence that was charged with portent to the anxious visitor. Augusta left the room, hastily called out, "Mrs. Herion! Mrs. Herion!" without receiving any reply, and then followed the track of a pungent odor of soapsuds, which, in its promise of human labor, was also a promise of a sign of life.

It was at once a true promise and a false one. She was in the wash-house now, and a figure stood at the wash-tub, bent to the task, and with its back to the door. It was the house-mother, beyond doubt; and Augusta called to her again: "Rose! Rose! Don't you know me? Don't you hear?"

The figure never stirred, but kept rigid in the lines of its slight stoop over the tub. One arm was bent; the other clutched at the left breast.

Augusta screamed, with a sense of dread foreboding, and ran forward. It was Rose, indeed, but with head bowed, eyes fixed in a glassy stare, and stone-dead at her post of duty and sacrifice.



The Yellow Van

She was still beautiful even in this ruin. The glorious wealth of dark hair was there, though it was now streaked with gray. The wan face had lost the unbroken oval of its line, the cheeks the color from which she might have derived her name. The poor hand, still clutching at the heart, was no longer the hand of the dairymaid of Allonby. It was bleached and wrinkled with the hot water and with the chemical compounds; and every wrinkle, stiffened in death, looked as though it had been carved in stone. Saddest of all marrings—beauty ravaged by toil and misery before its time.

So perished Rose Herion. "I relieve thee of the burden of existence," whispers the Buddha, as he bestows his boon of eternal sleep on the perfect man. The Merciful, the Compassionate, had looked her way at last.

XL



OSE was buried in the great churchyard of Slocum Magna. There was at first an intention of laying her in one of the London cemeteries, but Augusta would not hear of that. Her ideas of justice found a sort of grim satisfaction in bringing back the Herions to their own village, dead or alive.

Mr. Raif was only less disgusted with the change of plan than the London undertaker. For him this unedifying return of the prodigal with mortuary honors was a humiliation for the system which had driven her forth. It was a bad example for the village. Poor Rose's coffin might be a Pandora's box charged with all sorts of subversive ideas to taint the country-side. A pauper's grave for it in distant London might have furnished him with the matter for a homily. As it was, he declined to take any part in the ceremony, and willingly relinquished his share in it to his colleague.

Augusta attended the funeral, and not by deputy, but in her own person. The whole village was by her side. All sorrowed, even those who, like Grimber, saw in the occasion but the fulfilment of a prophecy of doom. All had loved Rose. At his evening

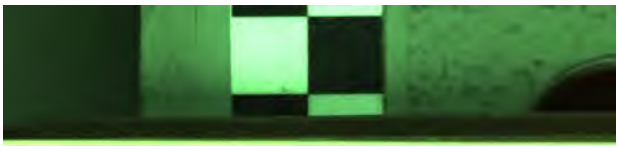
sitting Job called for another "mug o' yel" to toast her memory. "She wur a good un, she wur—died at her post." There was a subflavor of bitterness in the tribute. He could not but reflect that his wife's devotion took the form rather of driving him to his work than of dying to do it for him. His select moral was not wanting. "It 's what I always say: speak yer mind, an' you get the sack. You don't get it for speakin': you get it, that 's all." It was the peasant moral far and wide: "Lie low."

George was brought back to the village as soon as he could bear the journey, and properly provided for. The child of course came with him, and the two mothers were there to look after both. All this was Augusta's care. It was what the blacksmith called making a clean job of it. The village hardly knew how to look at the matter. A few thought that the injured man was lucky in the prospect of being "kep' for life," and that a paralyzed spinal system was no excessive price to pay for the luxury. These consequently were free to regard him as the victor in the long struggle with the castle. The agent naturally had other views. The crippled man, the orphaned child, were awful object-lessons of the folly of resistance to the system. Who could have a doubt as to the winning side, with this withered thing sunning itself in its bandages at the cottage door, by the duke's leave, this child learning to cry "mammy" to its grandams, and with the mother it was beginning to forget in the churchyard? The village, on the whole, was much of this way of thinking. The

muttered moral of the fireside and the ale-bench might have been expressed in the terms of the catch, "Hold thy peace, thou knave!" All who have given up the struggle with circumstance come to that, from the Trappist to the Russian peasant, that lotus-eater of submission and despair. "Leave it alone; don't trouble: it won't last long. And then, still keeping quiet, quiet, you 'll be carted—you know where; and dust will be the end of it. The busy arm, the busy tongue—all vanity; and nothing helps."

So the old stillness settles down upon Slocum, and the grass gets time to grow upon Rose's grave. The village resumes its eternal order of things, if that can be resumed which has never suffered check or pause. For the real order is that Slocum shall sometimes struggle, but always suffer defeat; that the Herions and Spurrs shall unfailingly return to heel after futile divagations, and the Grimbers, Gurts, and Sketts never leave the path. Generations reared in dependence and submission find it easiest to go on in that way.

So thinks Mr. Kisbye as he sits musing in his library to-day over a binding and a cigarette—so, and otherwise. The victory over George is as much his victory as the castle's. Brain has won in this skirmish, as it is going to win in the final battle. The money-lender is sure that he has made a wise choice in living from a single organ. He has found it pay to be without heart and, except on the rare occasions on which he has to call himself a fool, without con-



science. Money has given him all he needs. His want of ruth is quite consistent with taste, both in life and art. He knows a painting as well as here and there a one, and will live to the end amid the harmonies of sense. He touches literature in rare covers, and sometimes, though not without a sort of derision, in the matter they contain. In all, he has realized to the full that prevalent conception of life as a conflict of forces for the wise satisfaction of a set of appetites. He is as unpitying at need as a spike-nosed fish ripping up another for a meal. He loves all good things in sheer technical perfection as manifestations of power—good music, good talk, good eating and drinking; and he loathes more heartily than ever all who try to give them an ethical import. Canvas and printed page alike, as things said, are nothing to him. They exist but for the way of saying it. He reads in many languages; and in ours, it may be suspected, not as a mother-tongue. He has just bought Milton's greatest poem in a two-hundred-and-fifty-guinea edition, and he is now dipping into it to find refreshment in its principal character, and the luxury of contempt in its dialogues on the all-sufficiency of virtue. "Pa—ta—tra! and that 's dog French for it!" he chuckles as he closes the book with a snap.

His disdain of the lowly is chiefly induced by their interested chatter, as born fools, about the right and the wrong. His wrath against George, dating from the fateful outburst on the night of the meeting, has never cooled. He despises Liddicot as a weakling.

He hopes to win Mary yet by sheer force of will. He feels sure that the reversion of the honors and the pride and power of feudalism is to his order. To them the country-side must ultimately come, by right of that modern lordship of gold that has taken the place of the lordship of the sword.

His next victory promises to be at the expense of the Duke of Allonby. He has finally consented to sell, and on extremely reasonable terms, the piece of land which has so long spoiled the view from The Towers. The real price is an invitation to dinner. The solicitors have met once more, and Mr. Kisbye's have suggested that his client may be found tractable on these terms. The duke has undertaken to see what can be done, and has even sounded his wife. Augusta said never a word.

XLI

IT is nearly a year since Mr. Gooding left. Now he is at Liddicot again, and crossing the moat on his way to luncheon with the squire. He found the invitation waiting for him on his arrival at Allonby last night.

The scene was pretty much the same as before—the visitor on the drawbridge, Mary in espial at the turret window. The squire did the honors of reception, with his son at hand. It would have been impossible to exceed their cordiality. Tom, now nearly well, has raised the young American to the highest grade in his estèem. He has announced his deliberate conviction that Mr. Gooding is "a sportsman." Beyond this, notoriously, it is impossible to go, as it includes the lower degree of one who "plays the game." He means the game of life, though his praise might be more precious if he meant the game of polo.

He is quite happy once more, and has returned to his old cheery conception of the terrestrial sphere as a picnic for persons of position. Mary has been busy with him in loving care of his convalescence, and for him in promoting an inquisitorial examina-

tion of his affairs by the family solicitors. Messrs. Stallbrass, Stallbrass, Fruhling, Jenkins & Prothero have succeeded in bringing Kisbye to something that may be called terms. Tom is going to lead a new life. It is a pleasant illusion for him and for his relatives. These total changes of heart and conduct belong to the imaginative literature of resolve.

Delighted as she was, Mary met her old friend with something of embarrassment. She was no longer the rather critical young person trying to classify him for her pigeon-holes of character. He had established a kind of mastery over her spirit, just because he never made the vestige of a claim. There he was, always efficient in an emergency, and, to all appearance, as indeed very much in reality, never in the least degree aware of it. Mary began to wonder how she could carry it through, and to arrange her commonplaces in advance—a fatal portent of discomfiture in encounters of this description.

His tact, or perhaps only the mere human nature in him, saved them both. They had been separated long enough to have memories in common; and, when they found themselves alone in a walk after luncheon, he, without the slighest effort, became the boy again. It gave her immense relief by putting her, at least for the moment, on their old footing. He had struck the note of the "chatter of irresponsible frivolity" as between boy and girl.

"And the good old automatic supply?" he asked. "Still going strong?"

"Now please be intelligible."



"Raif's village—penny in the slot, and the figures work."

"Don't be irreverent."

"And the worst of it is, they work best when you put in pebbles. But there, I 'm not bound to criminate myself."

"That 's a confession. Now I know who brought Grimber and Job together on that awful day."

"I can prove an alibi. I was under Augusta's eye all the time."

"I hope you have n't come back to upset any more apple-carts, even Mr. Raif's."

"No; duty before pleasure when the bell rings."

A certain change in him had not escaped Mary's eye. He was very much the man now. She liked him the better for it, yet it made their present footing of mere banter hard to maintain.

"Poor little Slocum—you won't care for it any more."

"More than ever, perhaps, in a way."

"But you are going back soon to look after your own villagers."

"My villagers!" he laughed.

"What have I said wrong now?"

"Nothing at all. And all I mean to say is that they 're not exactly taking any just now."

"Any what?"

"Looking after."

"How do they manage, I wonder?"

"They manage for themselves, I fancy," he said.

"What a funny country!"

"Oh, it 's just their way. You see, they are all so many little Dukes of Allonby, ownership and all; and you can't imagine the extent of their investments in false pride."

"Five hundred villagers, five hundred masters. Does n't it seem simpler, now, to cut down the masters by four hundred and ninety-nine?"

"Simpler for the one?" he said. "But it would be sheer depopulation: the villagers would have to follow suit. Ah, you must travel if you want to see sights. I always call Slocum my new world."

"I know why you came," she said slyly. "Augusta told me. You 're the American invasion."

He gave a little start, then laughed. "What 's that?"

"Don't look so innocent. You want to buy up things here. You 'll never do it; we won't sell."

"Not even your match factories and your steam lines?"

"Oh, things of that sort!"

"What other things, Miss Mary?"

"Well, the fine things—Westminster Abbey, for instance."

"We don't bid even for the pulpit, in spite of the Christian Science and the wisdom of the East that now go with the lot."

"Allonby Castle, perhaps?"

The vein of irony was so unusual with her that she grew discursive with the novelty of the sensation. "The land will soon be about the only thing we have left. Why not try that?"



He was silent. It was a good shot. His trust was actually meditating the greatest venture of all—the purchase of a huge tract of land in England for the experiment of farming under modern conditions and on the grand scale. Farming as an industry was their watchword, not as the mere labor test of a pauper caste. And, for their principle, they held that not the English land, but only the English land system, had broken down. Fields laid out, plowed, sown, and reaped by the square mile, with good wages for good workers, each man straining to do his best under the inducements of hope; the farm-house a laboratory; the farm-hands chemist's assistants; the barn an engineer's shop; the hall abolished as only a more glittering poorhouse; the best tools, the best brains, the best men everywhere; the market-place a real exchange, with the railways brought into line, by purchase, too, if need be, as parts of the wondrous plan. And, for the glorious outcome, England fed without protection from her own fields, and the surplus exported at a profit to the United States.

"Uncle Sam as the 'squoire,'" she continued—"tail-coat, straps, and all. A second conquest of England."

"Why conquer when you can buy?"

"Dear old Allonby! Dear old Liddicot!"

"Dear old China!"

"Now I wonder what that means! I don't see the point."

"I was thinking of the worship of ancestors," he said.

"Well, I don't mind telling you I was thinking of our poor aristocracy and gentry."

"Same thing."

"We don't worship them; we respect them for having made England what it is."

"Indeed they have."

"That 's a sneer," said Mary.

"It is, and I ask your pardon. But please consider the provocation—not from you; oh, never from you!" And he went on with a vehemence, albeit deliberate and restrained, that she had never seen in him before: "Such a country going to such waste! Such a system for running England without the cooperation of the English people! Training them down to the level of their position, not up to the level of their powers and their rights. Their education, high and low, still a joke for the competing foreigner, and a clerical one at that! The infinite littleness of the whole thing, the poverty of the issues, the inaccessibility to ideas!"

"We are not going to have our country ruled on 'business principles,'" she faltered.

"Why not, Miss Mary? Business principles are honor, honesty, justice from man to man. What 's the matter with them?"

"Wooden nutmegs—there!" cried Mary, seizing the first missile that came to hand.

"Remounts," he retorted, breaking into a hearty laugh. "The men who managed that business have not much to learn from anybody."

But Mary was not beaten yet. She remembered what she had heard from the squire as to the humbleness of Mr. Gooding's origin. Her pride of birth came to her aid. To think of it—this person with his masterful way with his betters, separated by only two generations from a peasant of one of her father's fields!

"You must not talk to me like that," she said in her grandest manner—the manner which she had caught less by precept than by the mere example of the picture-gallery at Liddicot.

The real sting of the rebuke was entirely lost on the young man. It had never occurred to him that he might not approach her on a footing of perfect social equality. The only degrees he knew of in his dealings with his fellow-creatures were those of sense, energy, and courage—faculty, in a word, with, of course, a due allowance for the voluntary service of homage where women were concerned. Her tone now made him keenly apprehensive that he might have been wanting in the last.

"I am afraid I have failed in respect," he said. "Please forgive me again."

"It is nothing for which you need care to have my forgiveness," said Mary, coldly, quite misunderstanding him still.

"I would not say anything displeasing to you for the world."

"I am afraid you would," said Mary, still with a good deal of heat beneath the surface of ice.

"Is not that rather ungenerous?"

"It is not meant so, I assure you. You might sometimes fail to understand, that is all."

"That is it," he said, with the same innocent audacity as before. "One does not take the proper account of ways of thinking, ways of life."

It was an apology to the woman still, not to the squire's daughter.

"We are not exactly your inferiors—please remember that," she said, by way of putting him on the right track.

"I know little of the others, but I shall always consider myself yours."

She began to think that he had caught her meaning at last, but she was woefully mistaken.

"Do you suppose that I could so long have had the privilege of your companionship without feeling the superiority of your goodness, of your devotion to your father and your brother, the charm of—"

If he saved himself from a still more personal compliment, it was only by a hair's-breadth.

Mary began to understand at last, and she left the society of her ancestors and came back to her own time. The mention of her brother turned the whole current of her thoughts as with a pang of the sense of ingratitude.

"My devotion! Can I ever forget yours—the long journey—"

"An outing."

And in that train of thoughts came the memory of his supreme service to herself in the affair of the



card-table, the one crisis of her simple life. It came with just such a rush of feeling as had kept her silent and abashed in his presence when first she realized the immensity of the obligation. Was it for her to give him lessons, when in all their relations his had ever been the guiding hand and brain, the surer for his lightness of touch and his unconscious avoidance of all vestige of a claim? Beside such appeals, what grossness in any other, and especially in her own of mere social position! She rejoiced that this blunder had escaped him by the accidents of nature and training, and she felt the full force of his homage to her womanhood, and to that alone. She was conquered by his sheer faculty—the only thing, happily, thank God, that wins at last, or where would be the hopes of the race? Here was the strength, in all its finest attributes, for which she had learned to long, and especially in gentleness and never-failing courtesy. Here, once more, was a man!

"It is for you to forgive me now," she said. "I am but a girl yet, and you are a school-boy no more."

"No, no," he laughed. "I am not to be dubbed into that dignity at a moment's notice. Let me still fancy we are only boy and girl together, for it has been the greatest happiness of my life. But since you embolden me to plead for favors, little playmate,"—and he took her hand,—"promise me that if I come to you when I am really dubbed, and ask you a question, you will try to give me a kind answer."

She said nothing, but the blood rushed to her face as she met his look with eyes as of molten fire from rising tears.

It was a reply of a sort, and it was so encouraging that, greatly daring, he drew her gently toward him.

And so it came about.

XLII

THE Saturday before the coronation, and glorious August weather. London was never brighter—or less severe—flags out, crowds from all parts of the country and, in spite of previous disappointment, from most parts of the earth. Every other conscript in this huge army of pleasure looked as though he carried the marshal's baton in his knapsack—that is to say, as one still hoping for a ticket for Westminster Abbey.

The central point, as the great meeting-place for plebs and aristocracy, was the Marble Arch. All else in London is for one or the other. This is for both. Here rank and wealth and fashion taking the air, yonder their deadly opposites commending them most heartily to the devil, in perpetual public meeting, under the friendly guardianship of the police. No other scene in the world to match this for the hate of hate, the toleration of policy and contempt. The police know what they are about. This assumption that the devil is ever ready to anticipate is one of the most persistent errors of the vulgar. He is a great student of history, and he bides his time. For those who refuse to bide theirs, the site of the

busy old gallows of Hogarth's day is close at hand, with its memorial stone: "Here stood Tyburn Gate." It is a gentle hint to the disaffected that valor must still be tempered by discretion.

A street preacher, who naturally enjoyed the same liberty as the others, held forth on the late postponement of the ceremony as a judgment on the nation for its slack attendance at church. The ballad-mongers were in full cry, one of them on the subject of imperial emigration. With its burden of "I mye be a millionhair," his song was quite a battle-hymn of the democracy, at need. The cheap jacks bawled their wares—coronation medals and biographies of the royal pair. The grass was black with recumbent loafers sunning themselves through the long hours between the closing of the casual wards in the morning and their opening at night.

Lord Ogreby and his family occupied a carriage in the drive. That nobleman was at once cheerful and depressed. His house had for generations claimed the right of offering a toothpick to the monarch, after dinner, on coronation day. It was done on bended knee. The right had not been denied on the present occasion by the Lord Chancellor, the Earl Marshal, the Lord Chief Justice, and other members of the Court of Claims; but, as the Lord Chancellor had observed in giving judgment, after counsel had raised many points of antiquarian and feudal lore, the question was, in this instance, beyond the purview of the court. Since there would be no state dinner, there could be no toothpick in active demand as part of the pageant. The right was therefore in

abeyance on the present occasion. The applicant submitted, with the sense of duty done: at any rate, he had fought the good fight. "I have my children to think of," he said with spirit, "and one day the banquet may be revived." He was now bearing home a brand-new instrument of this description, ordered perhaps precipitately; and, with its inner and outer casings, it occupied no small part of the roof of his coach.

He had just exchanged bows with a lady driving in the opposite direction and toward the arch. Her fine face wore an air of weariness that heightened the refinement of its beauty. After passing the gate, her carriage turned down the Bayswater Road, and drew up before a small turfed inclosure a few hundred yards on the right-hand side. It was dismissed there, with orders to call again in an hour.

The person who alighted was Augusta, Duchess of Allonby, in town with the rest for the coming ceremony. The place was her favorite retreat for meditation, and it had been provided by the munificence of an estimable woman, now dead. It was a small chapel, or a large monastic cell, just as you chose to take it, but a chapel without a service or other hindrance to pure spiritual contemplation. Outside, the great roaring thoroughfare; within, the peace of the desert, a house of reverie.

Thus spoke an inscription on its gate:

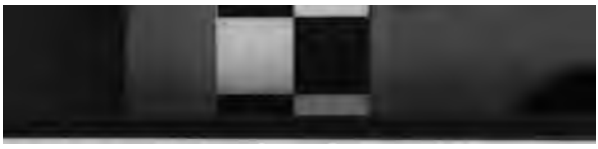
"Passengers through the busy streets of London, enter this sanctuary for rest and silence and prayer."

And again:

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Come and rest awhile. Commune with your own hearts, and be still."

The duchess did not immediately enter the chapel. Nodding to the solitary attendant at the door, she passed through a passage to a large garden at the back, well hidden from the road. It was quite in the note, being a garden of the cozy dead. For years they had been disturbed by no newcomer of their own recumbent order. They must have relished their exclusiveness: they were the dead of St. George's, Hanover Square. Posterity had not been unmindful of their comfort. Their gravestones had been removed from the original sites, as though to lighten the indispensable labors of the last day; and all was now in readiness for either the trump of the archangel or the pick of the speculative builder. One monument showed that poor Laurence Sterne had here found a bed, after the weariness of his closing pilgrimage. It was but a bed for the night. The flowery inscription, however, said nothing about the body-snatchers who, in due course of business, had stolen him away. Not for that mercurial spirit even the rest of the grave!

Augusta took a turn round the cemetery, and then entered the chapel. At first she had it all to herself, for London set small store by this particular bounty of the pious founder. At a later stage she was joined,



on tiptoe, by a gray-headed senior, with one hand in a sling and the other at his brow—like herself, apparently a refugee from the too insistent event of the day. He had evidently come to think things out on his own account, and he was quite unmindful of her presence.

She would have preferred to be alone. It is amazing how few opportunities of this sort any of us enjoy. There is ever some one by, within intrusive hearing or scarcely less intrusive sight. The partnership of bed and board with humanity is sometimes too rigorous. We have to be gathered together even for prayer. We live in crowds, think in crowds, and rarely have the happiness to stand with no fellow-creature beyond the range of suggestion. Even in this instance, it was still possible to spy other strangers of a kind on the pictured wall. Its fine sacred art told of things done long ago; yet these might still have been kept more in the key of repose. The too thunderous and tumultuous fellowship of the prophets, with their deeds of judgment, the excessively strenuous, though glorious, company of the apostles, with their energy of ministration, seemed superfluous in such a connection. The Founder in the wilderness, another founder under the tree, an apostle of quietism in his cell, would have been enough for that contemplation, "without form, likeness, manner, or figure," which is the all in all.

So Augusta just shut her eyes and began a meditation. She was sick at heart. Her grief for the death of Rose, long and deep, had gradually been merged

in a sort of personal disappointment. She had come out to her new life with such high hopes, and it had all ended in this! At first she meant to accept the system and work it out on its own lines. This failed when she found that it ground out poverty, dependence, and depopulation as by a mechanical law. Then, fatuously, she aspired to reform it, and that hope was now buried in a grave. The system had triumphed over her more than over all the rest of them put together. The only part before her now was the insignificant one of leader of fashion and ornament of the country-side. What a business, to be forever setting an example in trivial things, as one of the great exemplars of a nation perishing of the imitation of its betters!

"The old order, the old manners, the old faith—piteous to have to smirk one's way through all their proprieties, feeling all the while how they have lost their shaping virtue for the men and women of the time. A day in Mr. Raif's school as a preparation for the shock of our modern battle of life! A day in Mr. Raif's church! Really, some religions are not much better than some stimulants. The Dutch courage of these rites for the ordeals of poverty, pain, and death! And most of them so dreadfully old-fashioned, as if the chief business of the science of all the sciences was not to be perpetually renewing itself with the larger outlook on nature, and the expansion of the mind and soul. Never has any church been the same thing, thank God, in any two ages, or even in any two generations. Man's re-

ligions are as the hairs of his head for number, and inevitably so. And Mr. Raif trying so hard to make us all letter-perfect in the prayer-book of the day before yesterday!"

The ray from the skylight, after illuminating the face of a pictured apostle, was now rendering the same service to a martyr. Nothing else had happened. The stranger kept himself to himself with a discretion beyond praise. He stroked his wounded hand from time to time, but he never once looked Augusta's way.

"And sometimes, to be fair," she mused, being still fancy-free, "the poverty of the discoveries, the mere islands under the lee that are mistaken for a continent! Our smart set touchingly busy under American leadership in applying the principles of the game of bluff to man's relations with his Maker —trying to will themselves into a good time, and the prolongation of it in earthly immortality. Religions that satisfy the sense of wonder, the sense of credulity, without making any troublesome demands on the sense of duty. Mere fancy patterns in believing, without even the tables from the Mount. Made-up mysteries of the great panjandrum, coupled with the right to do as you darned please. Life all apparatus. Automatic cures for drunkenness, and medicated baths for weakness of the will. Interested quests for missing faculties stolen or strayed through the ages. Whole drawing-rooms full of Pointed Toes trying to think anemic glands into energy, in the hope of coming on the track of their lost tribes of

sense. Why not make the best of those you have? Marcus took overmuch pains in the enumeration of his debts to the wise. He forgot his debt to the fools in teaching him what to laugh at and to loathe.

"Poor Points! on the issue of this warfare between them and the Squares turns the welfare of England, and of all human society. History is but a record of its varied fortunes. The Points had a merry time of it in the Italy of the Renascence, and, as we know, their symbol actually curled upward with the sense of successful aspiration to the mastery of life. But a time came!

"The time is coming here; and England 's going to win, and beat down its baser part under its feet. Let us have that faith in our race."

A fly buzzed, not without shock to the spirit of the scene. It was tumult of a kind. Augusta thought "shoo!" to it with the happiest results; and, after this triumphant exercise of will power, resumed.

Meanwhile the stranger had not been idle on his own account. He uttered no word, gave no outward and visible sign beyond the occasional stroking of the bandaged hand. He merely thought his thoughts, like his neighbor, but, by a law of sympathy which others may know how to trace, they flowed more or less in the same current as hers. For this is what he was saying to himself:

"Real superiorities anywhere the rarest thing. Whole sections in church and state perishing for the want of them, and the mere caretakers not likely to be of much avail on England's coming judgment-

day. I mind me of a certain sheep's carcass seen outside a butcher's shop at Christmas-tide, with its card to indicate high honors at Islington. Yet the throat bore witness to just the same treatment as that of the common fellows alongside which had gained no decoration. And the pompous victim had no doubt been hustled to his doom and stretched on the rack as rudely by the fierce tireman with the knife. Fancy its ineffectual bleat: 'Mind what you are doing! I 'm a first prize at the cattle show!' At this stage, alas! it was but one sheep more."

In his next flight he almost touched Augusta mind to mind.

"America, best of actual nations, no doubt, as once was England before it. But ware breakers! What are you going to Americanize? Match factories and steam lines are nearly done; but social justice—how do you stand for that? America eaten up with the pride of life, with Europe waiting for a lead. Are you going to carry it and yourself farther, or only to sink back into mother's arms? Once the hope of the nations, now only their competitor and conqueror—a very different thing! Money the too universal test: preachers and poets filing their return of income for the newspapers, to show how well it pays. Not less riches or less comfort for all, but a better share for some. What are you going to do about the back premises?

"Come over and help as soon as you can, if only for the sake of helping yourself. Society everywhere apparently under sentence of death for ill-distributed

wealth—pomp and privation both exceeding all healthful bounds, with resultant deadness of soul and stint of body. For the last see factories and 'far-flung battle-line.'

"Touching, yet foolish too, the idle rich everywhere, now so extensively resorting to cremation in the vain hope of giving the recording-angel the slip. He 'll find the body, you bet. Discourage, if possible, by suitable remonstrances. Cremation a good thing, but must be loved for itself.

"Will anybody give England a new type of young man, the nation's pride? The government might offer a prize. High marks for modesty, simplicity, earnestness, book-work in the things that count, and the power of 'swotting' at the art of life. General aim—highest possible differentiation from the snipe. Class 1, Young Men of Family; Class 2, Officers and Gentlemen; Class 3, Officers; Class 4, Sons of Toil. Extra prizes for young women to match.

"A new sort of person wanted very much everywhere. Meantime, the counter-jumper may be of help. Strike, but hear. He is frugal, hard-working, obliging, and of a more than courtly civility. His whole life a training in these qualities, with their underlying self-denial and self-control. Has been under the harrow, no small part of it. A wise legislature should see that every child had a touch of this instrument at the start. It is far more important than the lancet; and, in this case, we might fairly abolish the conscientious objector. Similarly, little shop-girls (maids of all work, with ten in

family preferred) quite the hope of the nation. No damn nonsense in them, and the country is perishing of that. They see life in its realities of labor, temperance, simplicity, low-pitched claim. Young ladyhood is killing the one half of us, and young sparkishness the other. Post-office and other clerical varieties of our modern miss, of great promise, but should be warned against being too sweet on themselves, and prayed with, morning and evening, against airs. Compulsory marriage between these and young navvies of good conduct worth considering as an extreme measure. Marriage with the merely muscular heathen in the boating and football line placed in the table of prohibited degrees.

"The absolute necessity of reorganizing our duffers in the interest of the social order. A possible revolt of them how awful! Think of their finding a second Spartacus, these failures in all departments, and rising on their lords and masters, the clever fellows! The feudal system no other than the clever fellows in their setting of age and circumstance. Muttered wrath of the duffers against these for their usurpation of all the best things of life as their fee for leadership. 'After all, we have our stomachs as well as you; and why make us suffer so fearfully for want of brains?' If they found no Spartacus, the defect might still be made good by mere weight of numbers—as though the sheep turned on the dog, on a deliberate reckoning of the cost in torn fleeces. Defeat in the end, no doubt, but what havoc in the course of it! Perhaps more economic in the long run,

in every sense, to admit them to a larger share of the pudding. 'Let us in, or we will spoil your universe' —what a rallying-cry!"

Then Augusta struck in with a stray thought: "Beautiful on the mountains, Scottish or American, the feet of those poor students working as plowmen, stokers, packers, and cabmen in the intervals of their college terms. Surely Oxford might be restored to persons of this stamp without troubling Mr. Rhodes."

And thus the stranger again, still harping on England's daughter across the seas:

"New and serious attempt on the part of our writing clan to rediscover America, following in the wake of our modern Columbus of philosophical literature, E. J. Payne. More and Montaigne and Shakspere saw that the machinery of feudalism was outworn, and that we must cross the Atlantic for a new start in truth and nature, if not, as now, to re-teach its second crop of aborigines the lesson they are themselves making haste to forget. With all its faults, America still looming large as the land of ideas. We must pass through and beyond it to get to higher things. They beat us by their impertinent curiosity about everything under the sun, including their own souls. They are actually trying to make a new religion, and, though the attempt may not succeed, it must have precious results of the experimental order.

"That Easter-day metaphysic of a worthy bishop —sin and death abashed before a miracle, and ut-

terly overthrown. He owns, to his sorrow, that 'the church is not in possession.' How can it be, good man? It does not meet the facts of modern suffering, modern discontent; and we want a new adjustment. Be not alarmed; there have been hundreds before, each more or less adequate, and therefore true for its hour. There will be thousands again.

"Try brotherhoods of social justice, but brotherhoods of the world instead of the cloister; sisterhoods—and more especially—as well. Anchorites of the warehouse and of the drawing-room, desperately concerned in finding out how a fine life should be led, and in bringing liberty, equality, and fraternity into every-day concerns. Being pledged one to another by their vows—coöperators of the affections; trusts of the heart; contrivers of corners in magnanimity, self-sacrifice, self-control, leading the world's life, but even that to finer issues, and the soul's life in the temples that are also their homes.

"But not overmuch organization. The 'plan of salvation'—ill-omened phrase! It is all so pigeonholed and docketed nowadays in affairs of the spirit—so far in the fetching, so remote. Rome and Lambeth these bureaus of paradise! Less crimson tape.

"And give the men thus bred their chance of the land, and of every other good thing going. The land for the people, without a revolution of blood—unless you insist on it. Break the territorial aristocracy, old and new, and buy them out. Liddicot and his Grace of Allonby quite ready for heaven; Kisbye also ripe for a bit of a change in another

sphere. The state as owner; and, as holder at a fair rent, anybody that can put the brown earth to good use in any quantity. Other ownership, other rent of it, a crime, as between man and man."

Augusta was just getting ready for the antistrophe; and how much longer the silent choral might have gone on between them no man can say. But at this moment the attendant came in, and making a sign to her, held out his hand for the expected shilling, not in vain. It was time to go, the carriage of the Duchess of Allonby stopped the way.

The duke was waiting for her.

"I am in luck," he said. "I was looking for you in the drive, and I met the carriage." He seemed uneasy for all that.

"I have asked him for to-day, Augusta, just to get it over. Would you mind? There 'll be nobody else."

"And who is the somebody?"

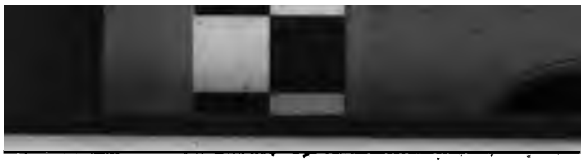
"Well—Kisbye, you know!"

It was the sign of capitulation.

"As you please, Henry, of course," and she turned her head to save him the sight of a wry face.

There was a sense of something impending in the banners, the roll of the traffic, the hum of the street. Was it the end of an epoch—the old order that had passed away, the new that had come to take its place? The omens were not all favorable. The sky became suddenly overcast; there was a threat of storm.

Another vehicle was at the gate, rather to the



ducal coachman's disgust. It was a curious structure, mounted on a lorry, as though for repairs, and evidently much the worse for a late mishap.

Augusta at once recognized the yellow van. And, as she did so, the stranger stalking forth erect, like a soldier taking his place for battle, nodded a marching order to the man at the horse's head.

Old Redmond stood confessed; and the van served as an introduction.

"You have met with an accident?"

"Hardly that, duchess." And he touched his cap.

She started.

"A broken head and what not; a house broken over it in a riot raised by the land-grabbers. We shall get both mended, and go on as before. Such things are among our rules of the road."

"Poor man!"

"I need no pity: we 'll have England for the English people yet."

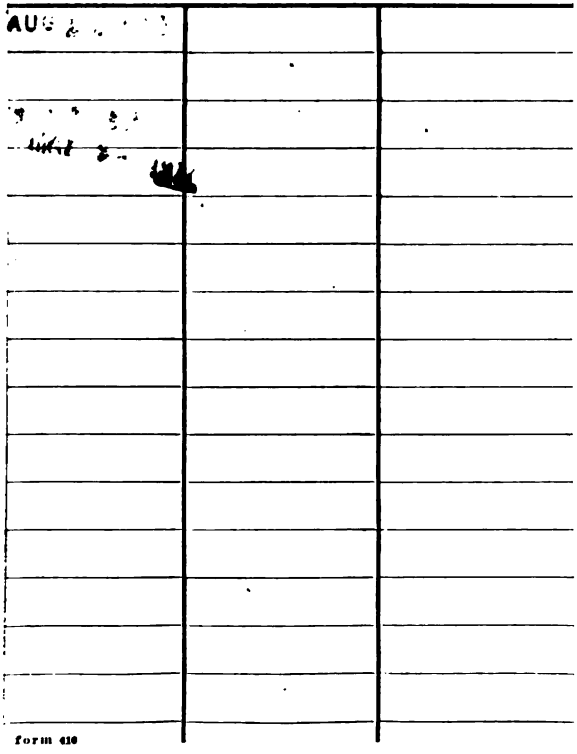
All moved away—the battered veteran to his line of march, the Duchess of Allonby only to dinner with Mr. Kisbye! She sighed: it was impossible not to feel the difference in the dignity of their fates.

When last seen, the van was in a ray from a sunburst that parted the clouds.



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